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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

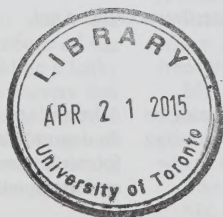
Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 13 April 2015

Lundi 13 avril 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 avril 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I'd ask for unanimous consent for members to wear the Vimy pin, recognizing the 98th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9, 1917. Pins have been distributed this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent to wear the distributed badges. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I would ask all members to welcome Mrs. Brigitte McCague and several members of the McCague family; they're here this morning for George McCague's eulogy. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Haliburton—the member from—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Northumberland—Quinte West.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —Northumberland—Quinte West; sorry, I've been off too long.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Kim Rudd, the Liberal candidate for our next federal election from Northumberland—Peterborough South. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to stand and recognize in our public gallery today members of the Society of Energy Professionals who are holding a lobby day today. They're led by president Scott Travers and have members from across the province who help power Ontario. With over 8,000 members who work to generate, transmit, distribute and regulate the power that the province's people and businesses rely on, they are a key part of our energy sector.

I just want to remind members that the Society will be hosting a reception tonight beginning at 5 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to welcome the grade 10 class from Francis Libermann Catholic secondary school in the great riding of Scarborough—Rouge River. They're accompanied today by their teachers, Mr. Ebreo and Mr. Ruggiero. They're here to observe the

Legislature as part of their civics program. They're in the west gallery, and I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce legislative page Cailyn Perry from Macphail Memorial Elementary School in the great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to introduce a new page to everyone this morning. We have, from my riding of Davenport, Misha Davies Gedalof, from Winona Drive Senior Public School. Welcome, Misha.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the family of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex page Colton Tompkins to Queen's Park today: mother, Tanya Tompkins; father, Fred; and sister, Tatiana. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have four members here from the Society of Energy Professionals from the great riding of Pickering—Scarborough East: Rob Berthelot, Tracy Miller, Vicki Power, Dave Romanowicz and Mary Byberg. Welcome to Queen's Park, and enjoy your day here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome two guests to the gallery today: Donna Daffern and Martin Sarkisian.

Mr. Joe Dickson: On behalf of MPP Amrit Mangat, from Mississauga—Brampton South, I would like to welcome Cindy Atkinson, mother of page Thomas Atkinson. She is in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome today a resident from my riding, Rick Marvell, who is in with his grandson Corey. Rick is an ex-VP at Zellers, and Corey is attending Ryerson University.

Rick had another accomplishment a few weeks ago, where he actually won a championship in Florida for a free-throw contest.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome our new page, Ashton Corr, and I'd also like to welcome his mother, who is here today as well. I'm just trying to find out where she is. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mrs. Ann Hoggarth: On behalf of MPP Chris Ballard from Newmarket—Aurora, I'd like to welcome the page captain today, Joshua Osborne; his mother, Jennifer Osborne, and his father, Raymond Osborne, who was a page in 1957. They are in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Daniel Gibson and Andrew Stock, both from the Ontario Society of Energy Professionals, who are with us this morning for question period.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce you to a new page, Ethan McCready-Branch, who is right here in front of the energy minister. I want to mention that Ethan is celebrating his 14th birthday today, so happy birthday, Ethan.

His father, Greg Branch, is here in the public gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to welcome Kylee Mazerolle, who is here from Hillsburgh today. She is receiving an Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers in the Lieutenant Governor's suite right now.

Mr. Han Dong: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back. I would like to welcome one of my constituents. We have Shoshanna Saxe here today. She is a talented civil engineer who is currently finishing her PhD at the Cambridge University Centre for Sustainable Development. Welcome, Shoshanna.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome—he's not a first-time visitor—a constituent of mine from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in the west members' gallery today: Trevor Dick. It's great to have him here.

GEORGE MCCAGUE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to George McCague, a former member of this Legislature from the then riding of Dufferin-Simcoe, from 1978 to 1987, and the riding of Simcoe West, from 1987 to 1990, with a representative from each caucus speaking up to five minutes in tribute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute to a deceased member. Do we agree? Agreed.

It is now time for those tributes.

Mr. John Vanthof: It is an honour to be able to take part in this tribute to George McCague, on behalf of the Ontario New Democrats.

"I think I can say without fear of contradiction from any side of the House that George McCague leaves with the respect of all members of the House from all parties. He is a man who has done his job and done it well. He is a man who has earned our respect." These words were spoken 15 years ago by a member when George announced his retirement from the Legislature, and I think they're very true.

1040

I never had the privilege of meeting Mr. McCague, but on doing the research for this tribute I learned that there were many aspects of his life that I could relate to. George McCague grew up on a dairy farm, and not just any dairy farm. He grew up on Glenafton Holsteins. His father, J.J. McCague, founded one of the most prominent herds not only in Ontario but in Canada. It's internationally known. Even years later, dairy farmers, like I used to be, when we see the name Glenafton in the history of a cow family, we take notice.

George graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College and worked on the family farm. He also had a keen personal understanding of the dangers of farming because he fell from a hay mound and broke his back, and he was in a body cast for six months. I think that's also a testament.

In a newspaper article, George related how he enjoyed field work and fondly remembered driving the first Cockshutt tractor that came to replace the horses on the farm. That brought a smile to my face. Although I never worked with horses, I fondly remember the day our Massey-Harris 44 with a trip plow was replaced with a 414 that had a three-point hitch. It was a great day. Progress is kind of a rite of passage on a farm. I think that impacts your whole life, and I think it impacted George's whole life, to our betterment.

George built up a real estate business in Alliston and later returned to active agricultural work with the purchase of a sod farm.

At first glance, it may not seem that farmers and politicians have much in common, but a closer look reveals some striking similarities. In both cases, it's not just a job, it's a calling. The hours can be long and the success of your harvest often depends on forces beyond your control, and in both, countless hours are spent tending crops in what others feel could just be a barren field. People outside farming, outside public service, in many cases, don't have a clue of what people actually do.

Citing his father's inspiration for public life, George's public service career began as an Alliston councillor in 1960 with stints as reeve, warden and mayor before taking his seat as MPP for Dufferin-Simcoe in 1975. He served five terms before his resignation in 1990, after which his career went full circle as he finished his service in electoral politics as the first mayor of the town of New Tecumseth.

Today, we welcome a number of George's family and friends who have made the trip for this tribute. Those of us who have been blessed with the privilege of serving our communities know that it is often the sacrifices of loved ones that make our work here possible. As we acknowledge George's service to the people of our great province, we also take this opportunity to thank you for the role you have played in establishing his legacy.

I would like to close with an excerpt from Hansard from the Standing Committee on Social Development on October 28, 1991, after Mr. McCague's retirement. The Chair had called the meeting to order with the following:

"I will follow the McCague rule. Apparently former member George McCague, at the appointed hour for starting many meetings, used to look around the room, and even if there was no one there used to say, 'I see a quorum,' and begin the meeting."

Being a man of faith, I am sure he knew the verse, "There is a time to sow and a time to reap," but coming from a farm I am sure he knew that you have to make hay when the sun shines and the rain waits for no man. For that, we are very thankful for his contribution. It's been a

privilege to take part on behalf of Ontario New Democrats in a tribute to Mr. George McCague.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm honoured today to rise to recognize the contributions made by a former member of this House, someone who truly dedicated his life to his community and to giving back through public service. I'm pleased to rise today to pay tribute to George McCague.

In preparing for this, I reached out to many of George's friends and former colleagues. During my conversations, one thing became clear: George was deeply loved and admired by his friends and his family. He was a pragmatic person and someone who knew his strengths and helped others realize theirs.

One of those close friends I spoke to was Dan Needles. Dan worked for George as his executive assistant for five years until 1981. During our conversation, Dan described George as a man of few words, who thought extremely carefully before saying anything. When solving issues, George would listen to all sides and synthesize complex issues to their simplest elements. That was his gift, bringing people together through consensus and solving those difficult problems.

George was born in Essa township, not far from my home in Barrie. Even from a young age, he was dedicated to his community. He joined the Junior Farmers and, as one friend told me, "He joined every group he could find."

After returning from school in Guelph, he entered public service as a councillor in Alliston in 1960. By 1969, he had served as deputy reeve, reeve, a public school board member, Simcoe county warden, and then as mayor of Alliston. In 1967, he was also appointed as the first chairman of Georgian College in Barrie, and we thank him for that. In 1975, he was elected as the member for Dufferin-Simcoe. He served 15 years here at Queen's Park, holding portfolios in government services, the environment, transportation and communications, and chair of Management Board of Cabinet.

George brought his judiciousness to Queen's Park as he consistently was a consensus-builder. Linda Collins, former mayor of Springwater, told me that George McCague represented his riding well, mindful of all people. He visited farmers at the farm and was very responsive to any questions from his constituents. He served with great distinction and credibility. His long-standing record speaks to the trust bestowed upon him.

He had many friends from all political parties, with one of his closest being Liberal member and agriculture critic Murray Gaunt. In the Legislature, they passionately debated the issues of the day, but once the House rose, they often went on fishing trips. Dan Needles told me that George once described public service to him as "a long meeting with the odd fishing trip."

George retired from Queen's Park in 1990, but he wasn't done yet. He returned to municipal politics and became the first elected mayor of the newly amalgamated town of New Tecumseth in 1992. I spoke to former New Tecumseth mayor Mike MacEachern about George's

local contributions. He described George as a "community builder" and a "champion of the community."

George had a quiet way of commanding a meeting. He would immediately display leadership and was an expert at steering past distractions and diving right into the heart of a matter. Mike also told me that George would also tell him to "never ask a question you don't already know the answer to." I think he said this because he understood the importance of truly understanding all the issues.

After retiring from public service, he continued to chair the New Tecumseth Improvement Society. He also loved to give back. He was a driver for cancer patients and continued volunteering into his retirement.

At his funeral last year, the leaflets contained a passage from 1 Peter 4:10-19. It read, "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." George knew that his gift was the ability to build consensus and solve difficult issues. But he went further than that. He helped others see their gifts, and would consistently remind friends and colleagues of their strengths.

George was a remarkable man, who truly made his community, province and country a better place. Thank you, George.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm privileged to have known George Raymond McCague. He was a great man, a great mentor and a great friend, not only to me but to all those who had the good fortune to be counted among his many friends.

As many of you will know, I worked as George McCague's assistant for about seven years, during my years at university here and for a few years after that. I followed the great playwright and author Dan Needles, as the honourable member for Barrie has just mentioned. A couple of weeks before George passed away, he asked me to be an honorary pallbearer. I thought I better ask him if he wants me to say anything at the funeral. He said, "No, I want somebody to do it right. I've already asked that Needles guy." So George Raymond McCague, here goes.

1050

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of the proverb, "Say not in grief: 'He is no more,' but live in thankfulness that he was." I will be eternally grateful to George for the lasting memories he has given me and for the lessons I learned from him.

No matter what issues George was involved with over the course of 40 years of public service, he always knew the heart of the matter was addressing problems and people with respect. He knew that respect for all people is at the heart of politics.

Although our families have been lifelong friends, I first got to know George when I was a grade 8 student. He was running for re-election in the 1977 provincial campaign and came to my classroom, along with the other candidates, to speak with us. He stood out from the other two candidates because he treated us like young adults. He didn't deliver talking points or carefully crafted

campaign slogans. Of course, that was part of George's charm. He never spoke from a prepared text.

My friend Dan Needles, whom George nicknamed McNutt, wrote speeches for him over a seven-year period, as his executive assistant here at Queen's Park. George never delivered a single one of those speeches. But he valued Dan's work and would spend hours going back and forth with him and studying those speeches. Then he would put them back in his pocket and speak from the heart. Dan joked when he gave the eulogy for George that the funeral was the first time anything he wrote for George was actually delivered in whole.

Dan no doubt also wrote the speech George never delivered when he showed up at my grade 8 class. George spoke to us with sincerity and treated us with respect. He showed us he was interested in our thoughts even though we were too young to vote.

Of course, two or three days later George showed up at my parents' house. The next thing I knew, I was volunteering on his campaign. George was always pretty crafty, Mr. Speaker, in his own humble way.

He also never forgot the people who helped him and always looked for a chance to help them as well. He gave me my first opportunity to work in a political office when he needed to hire a driver. Actually, George didn't give me any choice. He once again called my mom up and asked what I was doing. She told him, "Well, he's working while trying to finish his degree at St. Michael's College." George then corrected her and said, "No, Theresa. Jim is going to drive for me and work on my correspondence part-time." Later, he encouraged me and supported me in going to work for the Honourable Perrin Beatty in Ottawa.

I credit George with setting me on my career path. Some days, I also blame him for that. But he always had the best of intentions.

George's respect and gratitude for everyone who worked with him inspired loyalty and deep friendship. George always referred to Henry Davis, who couldn't be with us today—Henry was his campaign manager for five campaigns—as a peach of a man. I'm a bit envious of Henry for the glowing praise George always heaped on him when he wasn't in the room.

After George swept all the polls in Alliston that were located near the Catholic church and school in the 1985 election, he went around telling everyone that it was the token dogan on his staff who made it possible. He was referring, of course, I learned many years later, to me, who was studying Catholic theology at St. Mike's.

George's own nickname here at Queen's Park was appropriate to his nature. He was called Quiet George because he never wanted to be, as he put it, a headline hunter, nor did he like to pick fights. He often said that one should never get into a spraying match with a skunk.

George's deep faith in democracy, coupled with his humble ego, made him a perfect fit when he served in the roles of Chairman of the Management Board of Cabinet and chair of cabinet concurrently for many, many years

in the Bill Davis government. He enjoyed these jobs immensely.

I remember him telling me with a wink that he appreciated that, as chairman, he was the person who got to interpret consensus at each meeting. Of course, I was to find out many years later from Premier Davis that he and George had already decided what that consensus was going to be before the meeting had even started.

George's wit was dry and often unexpected. After my nomination meeting to run as MPP for Simcoe West, after George retired from Queen's Park, his first words to me when I got off the stage at Creemore were, "Don't screw it up, kid." I thought that was rather strange. I thought he would congratulate me for being acclaimed, actually.

It was a few days later before it dawned on me, after a conversation with my father when he reminded me that the riding had been Conservative since Confederation and he didn't want me to be the first one to lose it. In doing so, George gave me the shove I needed rather than the pat on the back I expected, and I'm grateful for that.

Since I was elected, George never once played the armchair quarterback. He was always available for advice anytime I called, but he said I had to do my job the way I thought I should.

George Raymond McCague, I will always be grateful for your friendship, mentorship and leading example of integrity. Your memory will always burn brightly and warmly. We miss you very, very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to thank all members for their very heartfelt and kind words. As a tribute to George and to his family and friends, we will make available a hard copy of Hansard and a DVD of these wonderful tributes to a wonderful man.

Thank you for being here today, and I thank all members for their constant and ever-vigilant respect for former members. I appreciate what was said today.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: And now for something completely different, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Acting Premier. Cap and trade is a carbon tax by any other name. There is no way around it. This scheme isn't about reducing greenhouse gas emissions; it's about taking more money from the taxpayers to fund this government's spending addiction. It's pretty simple: When businesses pay more, consumers pay more. By imposing this tax on businesses, you will drive up the cost of everything in this province. It's a tax on everything.

Acting Premier, how much money will this scheme cost Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I'm disappointed at this approach. Climate change is already happening, and we are already paying the price for climate change. The record rain in Toronto in 2013 cost almost \$1 billion. The ice storm in 2013 cost \$200 million in insurance costs. Experts are predicting that the cost of climate change will grow dramatically over the next number of years if we don't take action.

What is very strange to me is that just a few weeks ago, all parties in this House voted in favour of a motion to take action on climate change. We are taking that action, and I expect you to stand with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Acting Premier: You recently cancelled the clean energy benefit. Many families, farms and small businesses will now see a 10% increase in their electricity rates. This province already has ridiculously high electricity prices, and ratepayers, we've been told, will see a further \$140 rise in their rates this year, as well as losing the 10%. Now you want to raise at least \$1 billion with your tax on everything.

Australia's carbon tax scheme cost the average family \$550 per year before common sense prevailed and the program was cancelled.

Acting Premier, with many people in Ontario already struggling to pay their bills, where will they find the money to pay this new carbon tax?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said before, people are already paying the cost of climate change. We are paying it in our insurance rates. We are paying it in the health of our children, our grandchildren, our parents and our grandparents. We must take action.

1100

If the party opposite is saying that we have to leave this problem to the next generation, we fundamentally disagree with you. That is a point of clear distinction between them and us.

We believe we have a responsibility to take action—to take action now. We've set our path. We will be going with a cap-and-trade approach, in concert with the province of Quebec, with the province of British Columbia. That's 75% of Canadians who will be operating under a cap-and-trade approach to reduce carbon emissions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Acting Premier: Your carbon tax will raise the price of everything that Ontarians buy on a store shelf. It will raise the price of every service they use that requires any form of transportation to deliver that service.

Acting Premier, after the gas plant scandal, the green energy windmill scandals and disaster, the \$2 billion on smart meters—Ornge and eHealth—everything you do in the energy sector you make into a boondoggle. Why should Ontarians trust that this won't be another multi-billion dollar boondoggle and tax grab?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are many people in the Conservative Party who are encouraging us to take

this action, including Preston Manning. Preston Manning, not known to be a Liberal, is saying, "Take action."

We have taken action. We've taken the largest climate change initiative in North America by shutting down our dirty coal plants. That's \$4.4 billion in avoided costs. It's like taking seven million cars off the road. We are committed to doing our part for a cleaner environment, a more sustainable environment. We're taking action. I'd love to hear your positive suggestions on what we need to do.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Acting Premier. Your carbon tax will make it more expensive to buy anything made in Ontario, more expensive to drive your car, buy your groceries, and more expensive to heat your home. The most vulnerable of Ontarians will be hurt by this tax.

For those already struggling to make ends meet, it's about to get even harder. Your consultations proved just that. I was there, and I heard from the people of Ontario. But unfortunately, I'm saddened to say that your government has chosen to ignore them. You don't care that they cannot afford this tax.

Acting Premier, will you rethink this disastrous tax on everything and admit that your climate change consultations were nothing but a sham?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We've been listening very, very carefully, and I wish the member opposite would also listen carefully to the voices that are supporting, including—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to end this quickly. I want to hear the answers.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, voices supporting this action include Don McCabe, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I think we should be listening to the farmers of Ontario. Don McCabe said, "The Ontario government's commitment to carbon pricing reinforces our fight against climate change and we look forward to working with them."

Listen to the farmers. Listen to your constituents. Climate change is costing us today; it will cost us only more in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: To my colleagues in this House and to people watching today, I have to say: Don't be fooled by the comments we've just heard from the Deputy Premier. This announcement this morning has nothing to do with reducing emissions, but rather the introduction of a new revenue tool to cover off their wasteful spending. That's what it's all about.

Back to the Acting Premier: Since you won't rethink this disastrous plan and you're fully prepared to raise prices of everything in this province, I want you to remind you of a line from the Premier's throne speech. She promised to use "evidence before ideology and choose partnership over partisanship." Evidence shows that cap-

and-trade systems are riddled with scandal, corruption and fraud; all things, I would dare say, that your government well knows about. Billions and billions of dollars have been lost to cap-and-trade fraud across the globe, and it's no surprise that you're looking to jump on that train.

Acting Premier, will you prevent the fraud that comes hand in hand with cap and trade and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's quite true that other jurisdictions have gone before us on this, and we are learning from their experiences. We will ensure that this is done right in Ontario; in fact, that this is done right in Canada.

The costs of climate change are staggering, and for the party opposite to ignore the costs of climate change and focus on the costs of cap and trade is disingenuous at best, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy estimates the costs of climate change in Canada would go from \$5 billion in 2020 to at least \$21 billion by 2050. Those are real costs borne by real people. I wish the opposition party would have constructive ideas on how to address this very important global problem.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, back to the Acting Premier: You have learned nothing from other jurisdictions. The Green Energy Act is a perfect example of the absolute destruction of our province, in terms of manufacturing, and our homes and families throughout this province.

There is a lot of evidence demonstrating the problems now with your carbon tax on everything, yet neither the Premier nor her minister could identify today where the revenue from this tax is going to end up. This is a worry.

Acting Premier, you've proven time and time again we cannot trust you. Will you admit that this cap and trade is just another general revenue tool to supplement your wasteful spending?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's time for the party opposite to pick a lane on this. A few weeks ago they voted in favour—in fact, the member from Huron-Bruce voted in favour of the motion from our member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, that reads, “in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislative Assembly recognizes that scientists agree that climate change is caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions and poses a serious threat to Ontario's environment, businesses, communities and economy, that scientists and leaders of G8 countries—including Canada—have recognized the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with a goal of avoiding more than two degrees of warming, and affirm that this House must take necessary action to reduce emissions, transition to a low-carbon economy and combat the effects of climate change.”

You supported that motion two weeks ago. Today you are standing in the way of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. When is it that Ontarians are going to be able to see the Ed Clark report?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member knows, we are committed to putting our assets to work to create a better Ontario, to build Ontario up. We have asked Ed Clark to give us advice on what action we take. I suspect the Minister of Finance will be able to discuss in more detail when we might see the results of that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the Deputy Premier can tell Ontarians why Liberals think it is a good idea to hold a fire sale of Hydro One and local utility companies.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite, in her own platform, during the election made reference to the very things that we're talking about right now. She based her projections on the ability for us to maximize the value of our assets, to reinvest and repurpose those very issues so that we can afford the things that matter to Ontarians like transit and infrastructure, and ensure that we actually gain even greater value from those assets. That is what Mr. Clark and the advisory team are doing in looking at those opportunities, and we will release those in the coming days and weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Selling Hydro One is going to mean higher hydro bills for families and businesses. It's going to mean an end to Ombudsman oversight. It's going to mean not being able to shed light on skyrocketing salaries at the hydro system, like we do right now through the sunshine list. The Liberals are doing all of this, despite decades of Liberals promising that they would never sell off Hydro One.

Now, they know that this is a strategic asset for Ontarians which supports health care and education year over year over year. They know it's an asset that helps us drive conservation, productivity and efficiency. It is too valuable to put on the auction block.

Will the Liberals simply rubber-stamp the sell-off of Hydro One—something the people own?

1110

Hon. Charles Sousa: What's important, and what it's going to mean, is greater efficiencies and more effectiveness of the very assets and crown corporations that we own so that we can repurpose and maximize their value. It's inappropriate for us not to look at these opportunities. These are indeed important assets for the province of Ontario and for the people of Ontario, as are the future assets that the people of Ontario are asking us to invest in. That's what we will do.

I've made it clear before that the council's work is guided by the following principles: that public interest remains paramount and protected, that decisions are aligned with maximizing value to Ontarians and that the decision process remains transparent, professional and independently validated. We are looking after the best interests of the public by ensuring that we look at those opportunities in their entirety.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Deputy Premier. The Liberals ran on a promise not to cut health care, but here we are, and that is exactly what they are doing.

Can the Deputy Premier explain why, every time there's a Liberal scandal that requires billions of dollars to cover up, the Liberals can find the money, but when it comes to health care and local hospitals, they say that the cupboard unfortunately is bare?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I must say that this question is passing strange coming from that party, given that the member from Waterloo—

Interjection: Kitchener.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —Kitchener–Waterloo actually said in the campaign that she could find \$600 million more. Where would that come from? She said health care and education. This is the party that wanted to cut more from our health care, wanted to cut more from our education, so I am puzzled by this change of tack.

I can tell you that the Minister of Health, I know, wants to speak to some of the investments in health, but we'll leave it at that for now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week I visited with families, nurses, doctors and front-line workers in the Niagara region. They're worried that the Liberal plan to close hospitals is going to put the health of themselves and their loved ones at real risk. There are reports by international experts showing that the Liberal plan "lacks any rational justification." Local Ontario Nurses' Association president Loretta Tirabassi-Olinski told me that she felt betrayed by the Liberals, saying, "They lied to us. They told us they were going to give us some home care and give us some real relief."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We can't even use quotes in a way which would be unparliamentary, so I'm going to ask you to withdraw, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So the quote said, "They"—blanked—"to us. They told us they were going to give us some home care and give us some real relief."

My question is simply, when will the Liberals start—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. I went through this once before. We just do not make that reference whatsoever, even indirectly, so I would ask you to again withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Now finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The local nurses' association was very disappointed with the rollout of the Liberals' lack of fulfillment of commitments they had made previously. So my question is, when will the Liberals start keeping their promises and stop cutting the health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to talk about our investments in the Niagara Health System, which we're very proud of. The funding in Niagara region for health care has gone up by 80% since we came to power in 2003. That's an increase of \$164 million.

But to me, what's really important is to look at the progress we've made in the outcomes that we're seeing, the improved outcomes. The wait times for hip replacements are down by 48%. That's a massive improvement. Knee replacement wait times are down by 144 days, an improvement of 41%. CT wait times in the Niagara Health System are down by 78 days, or 81%. We're seeing incredible progress as our investments, including investments specifically in decreasing those wait times, are beginning to pay off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week I also visited with moms in Leamington. The Liberals are cutting health care there too, Speaker. They're firing nurses in Leamington, and Liberal cuts are threatening the closure of Leamington's obstetrics unit, meaning that moms will have to travel an hour or more, in order to have their babies in Windsor.

Now, I think that Leamington parents should be able to have Leamington babies.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Will the Liberals actually do the right thing and stop firing nurses, cutting care and slashing hospitals? That's the question, Speaker. Will they actually do what they said they were going to do, and invest in health care—make sure they weren't cutting health care—bring home care services online the way they're supposed to do, and save the obstetric wards in Leamington?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm glad that the leader of the third party has finally addressed the issue of Leamington. It's a very important issue that I've been working on diligently for quite a number of months, frankly. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the work that that hospital—and the LHIN—under my direction, is doing.

When I first learned of the precarious state of the Leamington obstetrics ward, I asked the LHIN to get directly involved with the hospital. They put a pause on things, so we could have a full community and expert consultation to find out if there are options that would be

viable for that hospital that would meet with the confidence of the community. I met with a delegation of women, midwives and others, mothers who were expecting—that had come to Queen's Park a month or so ago—and spoke with them about the real challenges that they're facing, but also about the options that they're bringing forward. I actually believe the process that we've put in place with an expert panel, the massive community consultation, quite frankly, looking at all innovative options may actually provide us with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Premier won't cancel her trip to Quebec, which I might add would cost taxpayers even more with your new tax on everything.

When British Columbia implemented their carbon tax, they pledged to lower other taxes an equal amount, so the average family wouldn't be paying more—no more taxes, just different taxes. Deputy Premier, in Economics 101 that's called a tax shift. What your government is doing—that's called a tax grab. You're taking more from the average Ontarian's pocketbook because you can't and won't control your spending.

I oppose your cap-and-tax scheme, but since we can't stop your misguided decision will you ensure that this will not cost Ontario taxpayers more and that you will not turn this into your newest revenue tool?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the member opposite has raised an important question, and that is, where will the money raised go? I can tell you that we will be very transparent in how we spend that money. It will be reinvested back into projects that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Members will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was saying—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order, second time—right after I got quiet.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —the money will be invested transparently back into projects that help reduce pollution and help businesses remain competitive. Projects may include helping families to be more energy efficient—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —building more public transit to reduce congestion, helping plants and businesses reduce their pollution. We will be announcing the full plan later this year. But make no mistake, there are

savings associated for individual people. In fact, let's look at the experience in California. I'll save that for the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Only a Liberal could say that with a straight face, Speaker.

Again, to the Deputy Premier: When a cap-and-trade scheme was introduced in Europe, powerful industrial lobbyists armed with millions of dollars "convinced ... governments to issue more carbon credits than" were actually required, than there were "actual emissions." That led to emissions going up, not down.

We've all seen what your government does when lobbyists come knocking, and you need money or votes. We've witnessed your party cost taxpayers billions, with the gas plant scandal, the eHealth scandal, the smart meter fiasco, and you handed out sweetheart deals to your Liberal friends through the Green Energy Act. I doubt this is going to be any different. This scheme sounds like another Liberal boondoggle in the making.

Deputy Premier, what do you plan to do when the lobbyists come calling?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that it's important to look at the experience of other jurisdictions that have implemented cap and trade: California, for example. It's true that the University of California, Berkeley, estimated that cap and trade does add about 2.6 cents per litre. However—and this is the important "however" that seems to be beyond the ability of the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you. However, California estimates that the amount the average person spends on fuels declines from \$1,400 a year to \$1,000 a year because this kind of initiative actually results in improved vehicle efficiency and other measures to reduce fuel use.

There is a cost to climate change. I would love to hear what the party opposite is advising us to do on climate change, or are they just wanting to turn their back on the issue and leave—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can you tell us if the Premier, her deputy chief of staff, Madam Sorbara, along with the Liberal insider Gerry Loughheed and the member from Sudbury, have had an opportunity to talk to the OPP yet in regard to their involvement in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows well that there is an investigation under way, that

all members are co-operating fully with that investigation and that investigation is happening outside the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Deputy Premier: The Premier has said she was going to meet with the OPP in this the month of April. We're now more than halfway through the month. I asked you a very simple question: Has the Premier, has Madam Sorbara, has Mr. Loughheed and has the member from Sudbury met with the OPP in regard to that investigation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

If the member needs time, he has 10 seconds to wrap.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry. I couldn't see, Speaker.

My question is: Can you tell me when the Gang of Four is going to get those interviews? Will it happen this month?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I know the member opposite has a remarkable interest in the timing of the interviews. What I can tell you, Speaker, as you've heard from the Premier: We are co-operating fully with the investigation that is happening, and it is happening outside the Legislature.

CANCER CARE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2014, an estimated 73,800 Ontarians were diagnosed with cancer and 28,000 of those people died from the disease. This means that eight people are being diagnosed and three people are dying from this disease every hour of the day. I'm happy to say that I'm a 15-year survivor.

Applause.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you.

I hear from my constituents in Barrie who are affected by cancer, either themselves or their families. My heart goes out to all of those affected by the disease. Every day we are one step closer to finding a cure. The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Minister, I ask: What are we doing to raise awareness of the Canadian Cancer Society?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Barrie for asking this very important question.

We're in Daffodil Month, Mr. Speaker. It's held every April. It's the national fundraising campaign of the Canadian Cancer Society. Donations that are made during this month, the month of Daffodil Month, help cancer patients and their families in communities right across Ontario by funding life-saving research, support services and other important work so that fewer Canadians, hopefully, will be touched by cancer.

Thanks to Ontarians' generous support of Daffodil Month and the Canadian Cancer Society's other fundraising programs, the charity was actually able to fund more than \$20 million in world-class research to fight all

cancers last year. During this time, the society also provided critical support to more than 49,000 Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, let's all do our part to support this important month. I thank the Canadian Cancer Society for their dedication to the cause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Ontario is a leader in cancer care in Canada and around the world. I have heard positive feedback from constituents in my riding about the cancer care system in Ontario. I thank our government for the wonderful cancer care centre that we have built in Barrie. In fact, an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world. But we know that too many Ontarians are diagnosed with cancer each year, which is why we continue to take action to fight this deadly disease.

Minister, could you please tell us: What is our government doing to ensure our cancer-screening process is robust?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again for the question. Cancer screening is easy and it definitely saves lives. It's imperative that Ontarians get screened for cancer, and we've worked hard as a government to expand screening services and their availability across this province.

We broadened the scope of the Ontario Breast Screening Program back in 2011 so high-risk women are screened earlier, starting at 30 years of age. This means 90,000 more screenings over a three-year period. In 2013-14 the Ontario Breast Screening Program provided over half a million breast screens for average- and high-risk women across the province. There are currently over 150 of these Ontario Breast Screening Program sites across the province.

We also launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program to combat the second deadliest form of cancer in the country, and in 2009 we further expanded cancer detection by funding the PSA test to help fight the most common cancer among Canadian men. There's always more work to be done.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. We all agree that action must be taken on climate change, but it's your track record that leaves something to be desired. When you launched the Green Energy Act, then-Minister George Smitherman said that it could lead to a modest increase in electricity bills of about 1%.

Since then, the Auditor General told us, tens of billions of dollars later, that our hydro rates have tripled to amongst the highest in North America. People are forced now to choose between paying rent or keeping their lights on, between food or fuel. Now you've found a new way to put your hand even deeper into people's pockets.

How are you going to make sure that life doesn't become even more unaffordable for Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to know that the member opposite actually believes that action must be taken. The next question is, of course: What action are they proposing?

The member from Huron—Bruce this morning offered her advice, and that was to address the issue of gridlock in the GTA. We couldn't agree more, Speaker. We want to see, though, the plan from the Progressive Conservative Party.

The easy part of being in opposition is that you get to oppose. The harder part of being in opposition—and it's a big responsibility—is to propose better ideas. Speaker, we have yet to hear a better idea coming from the people opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, Deputy, we're here to talk about your plan today, so why don't we just call it what it is. It's nothing more than the latest cash grab to pay down your growing deficit. You're going to sell carbon credits in a costly and complex cap-and-trade tax scheme. There will be industry winners and losers.

Just like in the Green Energy Act, your Liberal friends are poised to benefit. It's you who will determine which industry is regulated, which sectors are given exemptions. This is your next scandal in waiting, all designed to bring in billions of dollars to satisfy your spending addiction and fool everyone into believing you're actually doing something about climate change.

The real concern is: how are you going to make sure the latest scheme won't cost us more jobs and more investment in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that if the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change were here, he would want to say that we are creating enormous opportunities for people in Ontario. We are creating opportunities for farmers, for people in the forestry industry, for those people involved in the technology that will help companies bring down their emissions.

The member opposite cannot put his head in the sand and say that this isn't costing people today. It is costing people today. It's costing them in their insurance. It's costing governments when climate change creates havoc and devastation in our communities.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy already pegs the cost of climate change by 2020 as \$5 billion, growing to at least \$21 billion by 2050. We are paying the price. The time for action is now.

1130

NURSES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

We know that the government is cutting nursing hours and laying off nurses across our province. The minister tries to deflect the blame to hospitals, but we all know who funds those hospitals. They say that the nurses'

positions are not being eliminated; it is an ebb-and-flow affair.

Speaker, the Minister of Health is the steward of our health care system, so I hope he can tell us, altogether throughout the hospital system of Ontario, how many nurses and nursing hours have flown out of our hospital system so far, and how many more does he expect?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: What I can do is refer the member opposite to some of her colleagues, who no doubt already have this information about active and open postings for nurses, for hospitals in their ridings.

For example, the leader of the third party probably knows that in Hamilton, there are open, active postings to hire seven RNs and three RPNs at the Hamilton Health Sciences centre. In London West, at the London Health Sciences Centre, there are active postings to hire 11 RNs and two RPNs. In Kitchener-Waterloo as well, at the Grand River Hospital, there are active postings to hire 10 RNs and two RPNs. At Windsor Regional Hospital, as the member for Windsor West would know, there are active postings for two RNs and one RPN. These are new hirings. These are new nurses who are going to come into the system.

There is that ebb and flow as programs are created and programs are shifted and nurses are shifted around the hospital environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think everybody in this House knows that the first part in addressing a problem is admitting that you have one.

So far, I have counted the equivalent of 242 nurses who have already been laid off, and close to half a million hours of care that have been lost in Ontario hospitals. This is a massive decrease in nursing care across our hospitals.

If a change of this magnitude is not worth the minister's time, then what is? The government likes to say that nurses are the backbone of our health care system, but it doesn't keep them from cutting nurses and nursing hours across our hospitals.

My question is quite simple: How many more nursing positions need to be eliminated before the minister pays attention?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I expected better of the member opposite. She's a health care professional. She knows how the system works. She knows that we have 24,000 more nurses in this province since roughly a decade ago. She knows that there are 10% more RPNs who are practising in this province, across the hospitals, since 2009.

It is correct that at the Ottawa general hospital, for example, where they have made some reductions, there will be five fewer full-time-equivalents in nurses out of that complement of 11,000 staff that practise through that hospital. But she may not know, because she's not counting this side of the story, that there are 46 active postings on the website—she could go to it—of the Ottawa general hospital for RNs to be hired into that system.

I would ask the member opposite that she be genuine, as I am attempting to be, on this important issue.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, in October 2013, the Premier challenged Ontario's agri-food industry to double its growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. The Premier's challenge is an opportunity to show our province, and the world, the important contribution our agri-food sector makes to our economy and our quality of life.

As we know, expanding trade can be a key part of developing and strengthening Ontario's industries at home and abroad. Building relationships with foreign governments and businesses helps Ontario showcase and increase our exports and provide new opportunities for Ontarians like those in Durham.

China is a key partner in this growing and rapidly changing agricultural sector in Ontario. Can the minister please inform this House on his upcoming trade mission to China and how opportunities for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Durham for his question this morning. I know that he's a champion for agriculture in the Durham region, and I know that he works very closely with Nancy Rutherford, who is the economic development officer for agriculture in Durham region. She does an outstanding job.

Minister Chan and I will be leaving this Wednesday for China, a unique opportunity over the next 10 days to really showcase what Ontario has to offer. We all know, on all sides of the House, that Ontario has an outstanding reputation in terms of food safety and food quality. This is a really good opportunity for us, Minister Chan and I, to meet with Chinese agricultural leaders in four cities in China and their government leaders to make sure that the Ontario case is presented in China.

More importantly, too, on our last step in Hong Kong, Minister Chan and I will be laying wreaths at the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the minister for his excellent answer. Promoting increased trade and investment in Ontario's agricultural food sector will help meet the Premier's growth challenge while keeping Ontario's agri-food sector a world-class leader.

But Minister, if Ontario's industry is to be positioned to grow and continue to compete internationally, more needs to be done by both government and industry. In order to help meet this challenge, it is essential that government work with industry to promote our agri-food sector while identifying further opportunities for growth and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please update this House on additional steps our government is

taking to support growth in the province's agri-food sector?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary question. There's a great innovator in agriculture right in his riding of Durham, Algoma Orchards. I know many people from all sides of the House had the opportunity to visit that operation, which is truly unique, not only provincially but nationally and internationally.

We have established the growth steering committee. It's being co-chaired by Amy Cronin, the very distinguished chair of Ontario Pork, and by very distinguished Deputy Minister Dr. Deb Stark, who has an outstanding reputation in Ontario's public service. They are coming together with the growth steering committee to work on the Premier's challenge. Premier Wynne gave this sector a challenge: 120,000 new jobs by 2020. Mr. Speaker, I assure you that we're going to reach that goal.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Acting Premier. Premier Wynne promised the people of Ontario that she wouldn't bring in any kind of carbon tax, yet after a decade-long spending spree driving the province deep into debt, that's exactly what you're doing: a cap-and-tax scheme that will damage our economy, put Ontario companies at a competitive disadvantage, kill jobs and saddle Ontario families with higher prices. This is a carbon scheme that she told Ontarians was "not part of our plan." She lied straight to the face of every Ontarian—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdraw.

So Deputy Premier, I have a simple question: Do you think the people of Ontario are ignorant or do you simply have no respect for them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Wow. First of all, I want to ask the member opposite to look back and see that we have, for many years, said that we are going to be introducing a price on carbon. This morning, we announced that we will be moving forward with a cap-and-trade process.

We have enormous respect for the people of this province. We have enormous respect for our children, for our seniors and for all of the people who are paying the cost now, in their health and in their wallet, of climate change, of pollution and climate change. We are moving forward, and there is real support for this initiative.

The member opposite is part of a party that supported action on climate change just a couple of weeks ago. I think you were right then, and I think you're wrong today. We are moving forward on this because it's the right thing to do today and for future generations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Deputy Premier, climate change is a serious issue that needs to be addressed, but not with

a carbon scheme that will hurt our economy, kill jobs and punish Ontarians with higher taxes and prices.

But here's another serious issue: your Liberal government's lack of integrity. The fact is, the Premier told the people of Ontario that a carbon tax was "not in our plan." The last time I asked in this House, I was told a carbon scheme simply does not exist and that I must be reading Alice in Wonderland. Now that you're broke, you've gone down the rabbit hole, you're turning your back on your word and turning toward a \$2-billion tax-and-cap scheme.

1140

Deputy Premier, be honest with Ontarians this time and admit what we all know: This scheme isn't about the environment; it's about the money.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, there are many who would disagree with that statement, and I think the member opposite would like to know some of the people who are actually supporting this initiative.

Gideon Forman, the executive director of Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment: "Doctors are very pleased Ontario is moving forward with carbon pricing.... Ontario's visionary leadership in eliminating coal power—along with today's announcement on carbon pricing—stand in stark contrast to the federal government's inaction on this file."

Speaker, I think that the member opposite would like to know what Jim Lopez, the president and CEO of Tembec, has to say. "We congratulate the government of Ontario on announcing a carbon pricing system to reduce emissions while growing the local economy and jobs."

Peter Boag, the president of the Canadian Fuels Association, says, "The Canadian Fuels Association and its members support the Ontario government's commitment to implement a comprehensive climate change policy"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

The Hamilton soccer stadium was supposed to be ready last June. Nine and a half months later, the stadium is still not ready and, after inspections, there are still hundreds of deficiencies. Hamilton police say they need this stadium ready no later than May 1 to prepare for the games. There's now a risk that the stadium will not be ready for the Pan Am Games.

Will the city of Hamilton, its businesses and the residents be compensated if it isn't ready? Can the minister tell us what the government's plan B is? Or is there a double meaning, Speaker, when the song from the Pan Am TV spot says, "Ready or not, here I come"?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I know that the Minister of Economic Development will take the second part of this question.

We're proud of where the Hamilton stadium is at this point. It's 99% complete. The Tiger-Cats were undefeated

in that stadium, so it has been functioning. In addition to that we've seen concerts take place there.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I had the opportunity to go to the stadium, I saw something remarkable taking place. Not only has that development changed that stadium—which was 100 years old—it has changed the area around it. You're starting to see economic development in that part of town.

I think the member opposite should be out there pushing the success of this stadium to the people in his constituency because, I'll tell you, it's one of the best investments to come into Hamilton for years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: What I love about this minister: Everything is always rosy.

My second question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Why will Infrastructure Ontario be handing over the full \$89 million to Ontario Sports Solutions before the stadium is complete, which you withheld? Why is there no provision in that contract to reduce, not merely postpone, that \$89-million payment for an almost one-year delay? Why is it that the public and the local subcontractors are the only ones being penalized for the main contractor's incompetence? How many other P3 arrangements have been toothless to reimburse the public for costly delays caused by the incompetence of the contractor? And what has this cost the public?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The deputy House leader will come to order.

The question has to be directed to the minister. They choose whether or not they move it to the other minister.

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister responsible for infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The last person we're going to take any advice from on this particular issue when it comes to the contract is the NDP, because if they had their way, we would have done this under traditional financing, which would have meant any cost of the delays would have been on the backs of the taxpayers. Because we did this through alternative financing procurement, any delays will not cost the taxpayers.

This project is 99% complete—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Maybe I'll share with the members some of the facts before they keep heckling. These are some of the things that still need to be done: waterproofing around the bleachers, IT systems integration, testing of IT and sound equipment, and some water-damage repairs to drywall. That's part of the 1% left to be completed. We're absolutely confident that this will be completed in time for the games, and because we didn't do it the NDP's way, any delays will not be on the backs of taxpayers.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Associate Minister of Finance. Minister, I know that our government is very concerned about the undersavings problem. Several studies have shown that Ontarians are not saving enough and that, without action, many will face a decline in their standards of living in their retirement.

I know this is an issue that many of my constituents in Cambridge are particularly concerned about. They want to know that, after decades of working and contributing to the economy, both they and their children will be able to retire with dignity. That's why so many are pleased to see that our government is taking leadership by creating the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Speaker, it was brought to my attention that McKinsey and Co. recently released a study that found that many Canadians are on track for saving for their retirement. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain how our government is reconciling these different findings?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the wonderful member from Cambridge for that very important question. I'm pleased to clarify those findings for the members of this House.

When we look at McKinsey's findings, it's a question of demographics. The study shows that, while older generations may fare well in retirement, younger generations face different challenges. The author of the McKinsey study said this: "Projecting the situation in retirement for someone who is 55 or 60 today can be done with a lot of accuracy or confidence. With someone who is 25 or 30, any study will have a greater factor of uncertainty."

As well, Fred Vettese, the chief actuary at Morneau Shepell, has said that, while he believes that those a decade or so away from retirement may have enough saved, "Young people are definitely going to have some challenges." This is exactly why our government is taking action: to ensure that not only we but also our children and grandchildren can save for retirement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm pleased to know that our government is reviewing a variety of different studies as it continues to consider key design features of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I've also noticed that a variety of new polls released by major Canadian institutions underscore how little Ontarians are saving. In the last few months, I've seen alarming findings from RBC, CIBC, Sun Life Financial and, just last week, BMO Financial that all point to a major undersavings problem. These polls highlight not only how few Ontarians feel prepared for retirement, but also how many Ontarians have not even begun to save.

Can the minister please share some of these recent findings with the members of this House and discuss how our government is addressing this issue?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you again to the member from Cambridge. Earlier this year, I travelled to 10 com-

munities across the province to speak with Ontarians. It was very clear that retirement is top-of-mind. It's easy to understand why people are concerned about retirement when you read the findings of recent studies. According to a study from BMO released last week, only 43% of Canadians are saving for retirement. An RBC study found that 30% of Canadians have not begun to save for retirement, and a Sun Life Financial study found that 60% of respondents now expect to work past 65, up from 48% in 2008.

These studies paint an alarming picture. It's hard to understand how our colleagues on the other side of the House can look at these numbers and still suggest that we do nothing to address this issue. Our government, on the other hand, is committed to taking leadership. That's why we're introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

Applause.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Ask, please.

1150

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. The European experience with cap and trade has proven to be what not to do for economies around the world.

Energy rates have skyrocketed across Europe. Germany's economics and energy minister stated that his country faces dramatic deindustrialization if energy costs cannot be reduced. However, today your government has announced that Ontario will commit to a cap-and-tax scheme, therefore committing to an increased burden on business and the people of Ontario with unacceptably high energy costs.

Deputy Premier, will this carbon tax raise energy costs in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very proud of the action that our Premier and our government have taken this morning: that we have joined with the province of Quebec, that we are implementing a very important initiative that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That is the right thing for us to be doing. Just a few weeks ago, the party opposite thought it was the right thing to do; today they have a different opinion.

As I said to a member earlier, you were right a couple of weeks ago when you supported the motion of the MPP from Glengary—Prescott—Russell. Speaker, I really think it's time for constructive advice to come from the party opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Again to the Deputy Premier: The evidence is overwhelming; your carbon tax is a cost taxpayers cannot afford.

In Germany, steel producers now pay double the US rate for electricity and four times as much for natural gas because of cap and tax. Just imagine how much higher Ontario's rates will rise.

Here in Canada, three of the five provinces that are further from their 2020 greenhouse gas reduction targets have carbon taxing schemes already. Clearly they are not working.

Deputy Premier, why are you ignoring the evidence? Does your government not realize that your carbon tax does nothing more than raise the price of all goods?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me one more time read into the record the motion that the party opposite supported just two weeks ago: "In the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislative Assembly recognizes that scientists agree that climate change is caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions and poses a serious threat to Ontario's environment, businesses, communities and economy, that scientists and leaders of G8 countries—including Canada—have recognized the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with a goal of avoiding more than two degrees of warming, and affirm that this House must take necessary action to reduce emissions, transition to a low-carbon economy and combat the effects of climate change."

Speaker, this government is acting in response to the will of this House.

EDUCATION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. Speaker, the Premier promised she would not make cuts to education, yet her government just handed out pink slips to 118 contract teachers at the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. Our schools are already underfunded, but instead of investing in education, the Premier is choosing to gut the system.

Speaker, if the Premier isn't making cuts to education, how does she explain taking 118 teachers out of the classroom?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The NDP is fortunate, in that they have three former school board trustees within their caucus, Speaker. The member from Windsor West was a trustee on the Greater Essex County District School Board, and she actually supported motions to close J.L. Forster Secondary School and Victoria Public School. When asked to explain the board's decision, chair Helga Bailey said, "We have to do this because otherwise we are spending money on bricks, mortar and empty space."

The member from London West—I know her well—was a trustee at the Thames Valley District School Board. She voted to close Sir Winston Churchill Public School, Colborne Street Public School, Southdale Public School, Maple Lane Public School, Rolph Street Public School, West Elgin Senior Elementary School and Sir George Ross Secondary School.

The members opposite know that education is complex. These decisions are not easy. I don't know why

they continue to criticize government for doing what they actually did.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to respond to the Deputy Premier, and remind her that while we have three former trustees, we also have a former teacher. I'm pleased to say that I know first-hand just how squeezed our schools already are. I also know that we should be giving our students a leg up and not trying to balance the budget on their backs.

Speaker, every teacher that this government cuts directly affects our students' education experience. Will the Premier stay true to her word and stop cutting and gutting our education system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to answer this question and actually to remind my critic for the NDP that we haven't decreased the funding this year. In fact, the funding in the last school year was \$22.5 billion. The funding this year is \$22.5 billion. It doesn't sound like a cut to me. The funding is stable.

In fact, we've done some really interesting things this year. We've actually doubled the funding for school renewal projects. That's for that major repair of the roof, fixing the leaky window, replacing the boiler. Last year, there was \$250 million. This year, there's \$500 million so that boards can—boards have been telling me for ages that there's a backlog. We're going to fix that backlog.

FIRST NATIONS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. My riding of Halton is home to a diverse and vibrant First Nations community that has played a vital role in our region's history. In fact, close to 10% of the entire aboriginal population that lives in and around the GTA reside in Halton. The Iroquoian Village at Crawford Lake continues to be one of the key educational and historical treasures in our community.

We all know that a strong and vibrant First Nation community strengthens Ontario culturally, socially and economically. I know that our government has demonstrated its commitment to invest in programs and services that cater to First Nation peoples in Ontario. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to create a stronger relationship with the northern First Nation communities in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: Developing meaningful relationships with First Nations is a priority for this government. In fact, last week, I travelled to Timmins, Ontario, to participate in the Mushkegowuk Council of Chiefs. That's made up of seven communities in the James Bay area. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss strengthening governance and economic development in First Nations. I met with the grand chief to hear about some of the priorities coming out of the region, and I'm eager to continue those discussions.

Premier Wynne has directed this government to move forward with a new treaty strategy tactic. It will facilitate constructive engagement on treaties, revitalize treaty relationships and promote improved socio-economic outcomes for aboriginal peoples. As we continue to move forward on these discussions to highlight an even stronger commitment to develop their economic interests as best we can, this is good for First Nations and for the people of Ontario.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope everyone will join me in welcoming Scott Travers, president of the Society of Energy Professionals, who's here with many members today. I hope that you'll all be at the reception today at 5 p.m.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I rise to correct my record. George McCague was the former member of this Legislature from the riding of Dufferin–Simcoe from 1975 to 1987, as I recall. My notes said “1978,” so I correct it as “1975.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. All members are allowed to correct their record.

The Minister of Energy on a point of order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent supporting Ontario's only team, led by the Hamburglar, in the Stanley Cup playoffs this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy is seeking unanimous consent to support the Hamburglar. Do we agree? No. Okay, thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIMY RIDGE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Todd Smith: Brigadier-General Alexander Ross famously said that when he looked out across the battlefield at Vimy Ridge, he saw “Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade.” He felt that he was witnessing “the birth of a nation.”

Every year we must reflect and pay our respects to the honourable Canadian soldiers who sacrificed their lives at the Battle of Vimy Ridge, France, Easter Monday, 1917.

I had the opportunity yesterday to lay a wreath on behalf of Ontario at a commemorative service in the warm

sunshine at the Belleville Cenotaph to remember the sacrifices at Vimy.

It was 98 years ago that the four divisions of the Canadian Forces came together for the first time to occupy the French hill at Vimy Ridge from the German army. This Allied victory was a significant milestone for our country as we joined together as one nation to defend our freedom during the First World War. However, we can't forget that this success came with great sacrifice.

Throughout the three-day battle, more than 15,000 brave Canadians overtook the Germans under heavy fire. At the highest peak of the ridge, where the memorial now stands, soldiers battled machine guns with their bayonets in a long, costly fight to victory. Some 3,600 Canadians were killed during the three days, and another 7,000 wounded.

With the 100th anniversary just two years away, I'm proud to stand here on behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature to pay our respects to those who gave their lives so that we can live free in Canada.

Back in France, a radiant Vimy sculpture stands as a tribute to the fine men and women from the First World War. The memorial has a statue of a woman representing Canada, a young nation mourning her dead. Below is a tomb to remind us of the soldiers killed in France who have no graves. We will remember them.

HEATHER THEIJSMEIJER

Mr. Michael Mantha: Manitoulin Secondary School math and science teacher Heather Theijsmeijer has been named the recipient of the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education Award for Exceptional and Creative Teaching in Secondary Mathematics for 2015. This award recognizes an exceptional and creative secondary teacher who demonstrates excellence in mathematics education and contributes to the overall development of students. A letter of support for Heather's nomination provided a comprehensive picture of her exceptional and creative teaching, her contributions to mathematics education and her ongoing support for students.

Ms. Theijsmeijer was honoured to be recognized at a provincial level, and she is now looking forward to representing the Rainbow District School Board at the awards ceremony in May.

MSS principal Laurie Zahnow was part of the nomination process, saying, “Heather is an inspirational educator. Her passion for learning is very contagious. Her need to put students first and her drive is what makes her such an exceptional and creative teacher. She is very deserving of this award and we are all very proud of her. We are lucky to have her.”

Congratulations, Ms. Theijsmeijer. Teachers will teach and be fulfilled in touching many young lives. However, it is later in life that the student will reflect on and speak of the impact that one teacher had on their lives.

NORTH DUMFRIES HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: On Saturday, April 4, I was pleased to attend a pancake breakfast in my riding of Cambridge which was hosted by the North Dumfries Historical Preservation Society. The breakfast took place at the historic Clyde and Scott's Women's Institute, and about 55 tickets were sold in support of the society.

When I sat as a board member for Heritage Cambridge, we assisted the Clyde and Scott's Women's Institute to refurbish the bell tower. It was nice to see it.

The event featured a number of fascinating historical archives on display, including local Tweedsmuir books.

Speaker, it was an honour to attend the breakfast and it was a pleasure to hear you speak at the event as well. The attendees were interested to hear about the Speaker's role—your role—and it was wonderful that you could provide my constituents with an understanding of how Queen's Park functions.

Joanna Rickert-Hall, a historian based in Waterloo region, spoke about the founding of the Women's Institute by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless. Adelaide Hoodless was an activist and advocate for women's rights and education. We have her to thank for many of the leaps forward that we have made in terms of women's rights in Canada and abroad.

The North Dumfries Historical Preservation Society has a very important role in my community. Its mandate is to preserve history and culture in North Dumfries, and it aims to create an archive for the township. Organizations like this one truly remind us about how important it is to remember and honour our past and to preserve pieces of our history for future generations.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: Every day, I receive calls from constituents complaining about their hydro bills. I've recently conducted a comparison that looked at the all-in cost of the average electricity bill in rural areas across the country. Hydro One's all-in cost far surpassed that of all other jurisdictions. It's an amazing 277% higher than for our neighbours in Quebec. The main cause for this was due to the outrageous delivery, regulatory and debt charges. These charges are unique to Ontario and are not found in other provinces.

There are countless cases where bills are more than double due to delivery charges, which are often more than the cost of the electricity. To charge more for delivery of electricity than the value of the electricity itself is a direct result not only of wasteful, inefficient and bloated bureaucracy in Ontario, but also the painful policies of this government and their disregard for oversight of these agencies.

But there's more: Tens of thousands of errors, over-billings, outrageous estimates and no bills at all for extended periods of time from Hydro One have resulted in

a crown corporation that people have lost, utterly, all confidence in.

It's now time to put an end to this disastrous Hydro One monopoly and the disastrous policies of this government.

UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: Universities in Ontario have been dealing with accumulated underfunding for years. The government's review of the funding formula for universities must not be motivated solely by the desire to slash funding; it must aim to improve the accessibility and quality of post-secondary education.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations recently met with me to express their concerns. They have asked that the review of the funding formula protect and promote the two core activities of a university: excellent teaching and learning, and world-class research. Funding must be responsive to the number of students in the system and the programs in which those students are enrolled. Universities should receive adequate funding to support good jobs on their campuses. This means ensuring fair terms and conditions of employment for contract faculty and hiring enough tenure-stream professors to maintain high academic standards and fair workloads.

Funding should be stable and predictable to facilitate long-term planning and to avoid extreme fluctuations in institutional revenue. Funding should be allocated across institutions on a fair and equitable basis to protect against wide variations in quality across the system and to support student success in all universities.

This review must be an open-ended, public and inclusive process where outcomes have not been predetermined or artificially constrained at the outset. Above all, university funding must not be subject to short-term political objectives.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to recognize National Volunteer Week. During this special week, we say thank you and celebrate the enormous impact volunteers have on our lives.

More than 5.2 million volunteers of all ages give their precious time to make our communities stronger and to build Ontario up. They do it by supporting caregivers, welcoming newcomers, supporting food banks, and knocking on doors for worthy causes. For many, volunteering is a lifetime commitment. They deserve our respect, recognition, support and heartfelt thanks.

We celebrate and honour our volunteers through a number of programs, including the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers and the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students. As many of you are aware, the annual Ontario Volunteer Service Awards are now in full swing in communities across the prov-

ince. This year, more than 9,000 volunteers are being recognized for their outstanding community service.

With the Pan/Parapan Am Games coming this summer, it is important we recognize the tremendous role volunteers will play. Over 23,000 volunteers will deliver an unforgettable Pan/Parapan American Games experience to athletes, families and spectators.

In addition, the games present an opportunity to create a lasting legacy on Ontario's voluntary sector. A certificate of achievement will be provided to volunteers to recognize the training and experience they gained to assist with future employment opportunities.

1310

COREY CONNERS AND JOEY HISHON

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I'm pleased to recognize the accomplishments of two outstanding athletes in Perth-Wellington: Corey Connors and Joey Hishon.

Listowel native Corey Connors is one of two Canadians who played in last week's 79th Masters tournament. Corey is an exceptional golfer and has been a member of Team Canada for five years. He won his way into this year's Masters by placing second in last year's US Amateur Championship. In 2013, Corey was a semi-finalist in the same tournament and, along with Team Canada, finished second in last year's World Amateur Team Championships. I would like to congratulate Corey on his fine work at the Masters and all of his golfing accomplishments.

Another local athlete who earned great praise last week was Joey Hishon. On Tuesday, Joey scored his first NHL goal, breaking a tie between the Colorado Avalanche and the Nashville Predators. Joey grew up in Stratford, and has played hockey with the Stratford Minor Hockey Association, the Ontario Minor Hockey Association, the Ontario Hockey League and the American Hockey League, and now the NHL. He was a first-round pick of the Avalanche in the 2010 entry draft. I'm confident that this is the first goal of what will be a remarkable NHL career for Joey.

Again, congratulations to both Corey Connors and Joey Hishon for their outstanding athletic accomplishments.

VARIETY VILLAGE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On March 23, I had the opportunity to be part of a memorable event in my riding of Scarborough Southwest honouring the Honourable David C. Onley and Mrs. Ruth Ann Onley with a 2015 In the Spotlight Award. This award is in recognition of the support and friendship they have shown to Variety Village over the last 20 years. The Onleys have gone above and beyond to support Variety Village's customized recreation and fitness programs for people of all ages and levels of ability in an integrated, engaging and inclusive environment.

Variety Village's true accomplishments can be seen through client-specific recreation, fitness, wellness and

lifestyle programs. The Ontario government has always been a proud supporter of Variety Village and the continuous efforts to improve the lives of the people in our community. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to help support this dynamic organization through recognizing all the individuals who have gone to great lengths to help support Variety Village.

Finally, I'd like to say a big thank you to the Onleys on behalf of the residents of the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise in the House today to recognize constituents from my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt who have received this year's Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. This provincial award recognizes individual volunteers for their long-standing commitment and years of dedicated service to community organizations.

Last week, I had the privilege of being part of three different volunteer service award ceremonies held in Scarborough, where over 100 of my constituents were recognized for their work in our community. One of those constituents, Muriel Alvares, a staffer for my colleague Minister MacCharles, has joined us today in the House. Muriel was recognized for her 15-year involvement with Operation Springboard-Scarborough Youth Justice Committee, where she continues to support youth participation in restorative justice. Thank you, Muriel, for your commitment to community service.

Volunteers are the most important resource that community organizations have. Their dedication to devote their time to the betterment of our community is invaluable.

Speaker, this week is National Volunteer Week. Every year, more than six million Ontarians volunteer their time to causes they believe in. I believe that it is this dedicated community service that makes this province a great place to live, work and play.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

TIM HODAY

Mr. Wayne Gates: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise and offer my condolences to the family and friends of Tim Hoday. Tim was 55 years old and served 32 years on the Niagara Falls Fire Department. Tim passed away from cancer that resulted from his work in the line of duty. His incredible dedication to his community will be missed.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Tim's family and his co-workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Not to diminish the importance of your announcement, but I would recommend that all members seek their House leader's circumstances under these kinds so they don't be

misinterpreted as announcements or statements. But I obviously give sympathy to the family members. I appreciate that.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AMENDMENT ACT (PREFERENCE FOR VETERANS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE (PRÉFÉRENCE ACCORDÉE AUX ANCIENS COMBATTANTS)

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to give preference to veterans for access to beds / *Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée pour accorder la préférence aux anciens combattants qui veulent avoir accès à des lits.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cindy Forster: This bill amends the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, by enacting a definition of “veteran” that includes former officers and former non-commissioned members of the Canadian Forces.

The bill amends the act to require the minister to ensure that preference in admission to long-term-care homes is given to veterans.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leal is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move that Mr. Mantha replace Mr. Singh on the membership of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Leal moves that Mr. Mantha replace Mr. Singh on the membership of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Colton.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition named “Ontario Is Not for Sale.

“Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

“Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

“Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

“Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hard-working Ontarians who are building this province; and

“Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands.”

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Olivia to bring to the Clerk.

1320

TERRY FOX DAY

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas on March 26, Bill 61, the Terry Fox Day Act, passed second reading with unanimous support from the Ontario Legislature;

"Whereas if passed at third reading before the Legislature rises in June, Bill 61 will proclaim the second Sunday after Labour Day in 2015, September 20, as Ontario's first Terry Fox Day;

"Whereas the second Sunday after Labour Day is the day on which the Terry Fox Run is traditionally held, and September 20, 2015, marks its 35th anniversary;

"Whereas on November 27, 2014, Terry Fox's home province of British Columbia passed similar legislation proclaiming this same day as Terry Fox Day starting this year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly move quickly to pass Bill 61 at third reading before the end of the current session, ensuring that on September 20, 2015, Ontarians can celebrate Terry Fox Day."

I fully support the petition. I will give my petition to page Ryan.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have received petitions from the Mattawa area, mailed to me in support of Bill 58, the Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize the new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with the unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails they are legally permitted to use these off-road vehicles;

"Whereas owners ... should be able to legally access woodlots, trails, as well as hunting and fishing destinations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I support this and will give it to Misha.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I wholeheartedly agree, add my signature and give it to page Luca.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I support this petition and am pleased to give it to page Carina to take to the table.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas accessibility to our public health care system is a foundational value of Ontario; and

"Whereas all individuals should have equal access to health care services regardless of their ability to pay; and

"Whereas patients requiring health care services often have to drive to a hospital to receive these services; and

"Whereas hospitals are increasingly using parking charges as an avenue for revenue generation thereby impacting some patients' access based on their ability to pay; and

"Whereas the Liberal Party promised during the 2014 election campaign to cap hospital parking fees;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario follow through on the commitment to cap parking fees at Ontario's hospitals at a level that ensures equitable access to health care."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to Ishika to bring to the Clerks' table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking

water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign and to support this petition and to send it down with page Joshua.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

"Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I'm proud to affix my name to this.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school ... yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school ...; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system

... due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto;...

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name to it and leave it with page Mira.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper *Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy*;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support it, affix my name, and send it with page Carina.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I am proud to stand today and read this petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families

to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I am proud to affix my name to it and send it down to the table with our page Jae Min.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I've received hundreds more petitions with regard to improved winter roads maintenance. This reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

I support this petition, have signed it, and will give it to page Ryan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015****LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX
DE L'ONTARIO**

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 2, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals for Research Act with respect to the possession and breeding of orcas and administrative requirements for animal care / Projet de loi 80, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche en ce qui concerne la possession et l'élevage d'épaulards ainsi que les exigences administratives relatives aux soins dispensés aux animaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill at second reading, we heard from the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member for Ottawa South. I'll now ask for questions and comments on their presentation to the Legislature. Questions and comments?

The Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Nobody's speaking? Okay. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on Bill 80.

Marine mammals are complex, diverse and magnificent creatures with unique needs that require the right standards of care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd just remind the Attorney General that we're doing questions and comments. It's a two-minute questions and comments.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting you.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is why we recently introduced the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, Bill 80. If passed, Bill 80 would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario.

Why orca whales—the prohibition? First of all, let me say thank you to Dr. David Rosen, a respected marine biologist at the University of British Columbia who led the team of experts to prepare a report.

The reason why this provision is in the bill is because orcas are very unique animals. Orcas are the largest of the marine mammals in captivity in Ontario and anywhere else. They are over twice the length and four times the mass of the beluga, the next-largest marine mammal in captivity. They are very social animals and normally

live in pods of five to 30 whales in the wild. Some pods combine to form a group of 100 whales or more.

Orcas typically dive 500 feet or more and can swim up to 100 miles per day. So the unique features and the extraordinary magnitude of orcas leads us to determine that their well-being in captivity would be especially difficult to ensure, and so we would end the practice of keeping captive orcas in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm going to have my time to do 20 minutes on this bill, but I just wanted to respond to the Attorney General.

This is something that has been long coming. We know that the member from—Ms. DiNovo is from?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Parkdale-High Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: Parkdale-High Park; thank you, Speaker. The cold has got the cloud going on in the head today.

The member from Parkdale-High Park was ringing bells about this. She was talking about how trainers were being victimized by talking about the abuse and the things that were happening in Marineland. We all knew right then how important it was that we do something about this, about the orcas that are living in captivity. I'm happy to see this come forward.

As a child, I skipped and danced as I went to Marineland, as I'm sure most of us did, just to have the opportunity to see the whales and the dolphins and the wonderful, brilliant creatures that they are. Then, as an adult, I realized that they're beautiful and wonderful and it's sad that I'm looking at them in this tank. So I'm happy to see this come forward. I know that there are a lot of other things that I would have liked to have seen in this bill. When we're talking about lions and tigers and bears, oh my—that should be in the bill. We need a licence for a dog, but we don't, in some areas, need a licence to have a lion or a tiger. So that brings up the question of how well they're being taken care of. There just needs to be more strength in legislation to make sure that all animals, regardless of size, whether they're a toad, a fish or a whale, are taken care of to the best possible being as long as they're in captivity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. We're seeing that people are increasingly interested in the welfare of the other species that we share the planet with, and from time to time we take steps forward in that regard. That's how I describe Bill 80. I think it's a good step forward for this province. It's a good step forward for all of us in the House.

There was a report commissioned out at the University of British Columbia—a very respected marine biologist, Dr. David Rosen. He put together a team of experts and, I think, offered a lot of good advice that guided this bill, that provided the sort of information that this bill really needed to make it a bill of some substance and one that is

going to make a difference in the lives of marine mammals in the way that they're held in captivity, the types of conditions they live under, the physical environment they live in and the psychological environment they live in. We need to ensure that, if we're going to have marine mammals in these types of environments, they're not harmed, that contact with the general public doesn't cause any harm to them.

1340

We need to look at things like the size of the pools that they're housed in. I understand that around the world there are differing opinions, rules and regulations in other jurisdictions. This bill proposes to do something, I think, that meets the highest standards.

When you look at things like water bacteria, the amount of bacteria that's in the water they're in, the noise and the lighting, regulations on the feeding, for the care, for the handlings, how they're displayed, these are all things—I think there's a real interest in zoos and the interaction that we've been able to have with animals. What this bill is proposing to do is to make sure that that environment is one we can be proud of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

We can now return to one of the members who spoke, the member for Scarborough—Southwest, to respond.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened to the comments made by the Attorney General, the member from Hamilton Mountain and the Minister of Labour on this bill. We all know it's an important bill. We have heard the NDP speak on this earlier. It was debated before. We know that they stand with us in favour of this legislation, and I hope that the PCs will do the same; I didn't hear anything when they spoke on this bill regarding supporting this bill.

I think we've realized that animals are much more sophisticated than we previously thought they were, and orca whales are one of the groups of animals that are very sophisticated. They communicate with each other. We've found that they use sophisticated techniques when they go out hunting in the wild. They go hunting as a group. They seem to communicate with each other when they're doing their hunt. In raising their children, there's a very close bond between the mother and the child—I don't have the exact word coming off my lips right now—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Calves.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The calf; that's right. Thank you very much.

I hope this goes to committee. I hope it has a good debate at committee and that the bill will move forward. It's important to get this in place. When Bill 80 was introduced, there was a realization by the minister that this kind of legislation was needed. We see it in other countries. Again, once this bill goes to committee, hopefully it will come back here for third reading and be implemented into law.

As I said before, it's important to get this bill through this House to become law. Hopefully, Ontario will be-

come one of the jurisdictions where animal welfare is kept to the highest standards.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to debate Bill 80. I have to say that I'm a little surprised that we're here debating a bill that seems to deal with the one orca whale that's located in the province of Ontario, especially when we just got back from a constituency week and the issue that seems to be pressing that I'm hearing about when I'm back in the riding is certainly hydro bills, number one. Affordability of electricity seems to be something that people are really, really very concerned about and interested in, and there's a bunch of other issues—the debt and deficit of the province, of course.

However, we are debating Bill 80, Speaker, so I will take some time to talk about Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals for Research Act with respect to the possession and breeding of orcas and administrative requirements for animal care.

"The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act is amended to prohibit possessing or breeding an orca in Ontario. There are two exceptions. First, a person who possesses an orca on the day before the bill is introduced may continue to possess the orca. Second, a person who first possesses an orca on or after the day the bill is introduced, but before the bill receives royal assent, may continue to possess the orca for six months after the day of royal assent...."

"In addition to the power the minister already has to make regulations prescribing standards of care, the minister is given the power to make regulations prescribing administrative requirements with which a person who owns or has custody or care of an animal is required to comply"—just to give you a general outline of what the bill does.

I think I'll use some time to talk about how this bill came to be. It seems to me that it originated probably as much from media stories on Marineland in Niagara Falls, and I believe there was a Toronto Star article that probably was the impetus of how this bill came to be.

From that, there have been a few things that have happened. There's an organization called the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums. They did an accreditation on Marineland after that incident, after the media series. I just want to note what they said because I think it's—you know, this bill is really about the one orca in Ontario. That one orca is at Marineland in Niagara Falls. I think it's worth noting that Marineland is a very significant employer in the Niagara area. There are some 700 jobs there and they spend \$4.5 million on marketing alone each year. It is very important to that area. I think we have to certainly balance having care for marine mammals but at the same time try not to drive jobs out of the province, because it's certainly obvious that we need those jobs in this province.

CAZA, the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, actually did—I took a look—a Marineland investigation. I'll just read a bit of that to give you an idea of what they found:

"The Accreditation Commission of Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) has conducted a special investigation into allegations that the welfare of animals at Marineland Canada has been negatively affected by water quality problems and inadequate staffing levels and that these problems were not appropriately addressed over a period of time. A three-person inspection team including two veterinary experts conducted a site inspection on August 23, and subsequently interviewed relevant witnesses and examined internal water logs and medical records.

"The commission has concluded that at the time of the site inspection the animals in question in the Marineland collection, including the marine mammals, were in overall good health and there was no evidence of animal abuse, that water quality in all the pools was very good, and it appeared that staffing levels were adequate.

"Detailed examination of water quality logs and animal health records as well as interviews with some employees, however, indicate that there were problems with maintaining water quality levels within accepted industry standards, and that these problems did impact the health of some animals in the collection.

"The commission found that Marineland's veterinary program is comprehensive and includes regular veterinary inspections and treatment of animals where appropriate. The veterinarians are experienced, competent and assisted by specialists as needed.

"The commission and Marineland have agreed that Marineland will undertake an independent, external inspection of its water quality management systems for the pools in question. The engineering evaluation will be based partially on a thorough updating by Marineland of its water quality management protocols and is to be completed as soon as reasonably possible. CAZA is to be consulted regularly regarding the qualifications of the evaluators and is to be provided with a copy of the resulting report. Marineland has stated that they welcome this study and will use the results to ensure that the systems are entirely capable of providing an appropriate environment for the marine collection."

That seems like a rational response to the criticism that was directed at Marineland. They did actually go on and have Stantec Consulting Ltd. come in and look at the water management systems for marine mammals at Marineland.

"The purpose of the study is to confirm whether the water management systems"—this is from Stantec—"at Marineland are capable of providing an appropriate aquatic environment for the marine mammals, currently and in the long term. The opinions and findings expressed in this study refer to all water systems for marine mammals at Marineland unless specifically stated otherwise.

1350

"No allegations have been made or concerns expressed regarding the balance of the water system at Marineland. No request was made by CAZA or a third party to expand the scope of the study. No information received from Marineland or reviewed by Stantec, or investigations conducted by Stantec indicated that an expansion of the study is necessary or appropriate.

"Marineland, however, requested and Stantec agreed to expand the scope of the study to include a review of the entire water system at Marineland in order that the results of the study be used to assist in maintaining the 'best practice' standards for the aquatic environment for the marine mammals. The study was expanded at Marineland's request to include the Friendship Cove ... and Arctic Cove ... pools and all ancillary water system components.

"Given the public interest in the condition of the water systems at Marineland we have issued this study in a format intended to convey the technical results of our investigation in a manner that is clear and addresses the expressed concerns regarding the water systems at Marineland.

"Marineland has requested, and Stantec has agreed to provide, further explanation or clarification of its opinions or findings to the CAZA Accreditation Commission, as it may request.

"Marineland has also requested and Stantec has agreed to provide further explanation or clarification of its opinions or findings to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (the 'OSPCA')."

These were their findings:

"Summary of findings and opinions

"1. The water management system at Marineland has been developed over many years. The water management system has been upgraded over time to provide comprehensive treatment to meet modern standards and performance requirements associated with best practices, and ongoing research and development in the industry. Overall, the investment in the water management system has been significant from a capital cost perspective. The Marineland water management systems share similarities with modern water treatment systems designed and operated for production of potable water for human consumption.

"2. Based on our assessment of the life support system design in place at Marineland, and a review of the relevant literature, it was found that these systems are suitable for maintaining water quality parameters for the species and number of marine mammals under human care and are capable of providing an appropriate environment.

"3. The treatment systems, pumping systems, piping systems, and electrical systems generally are all in good condition and maintained.

"4. Redundancy for power and water supply is built into each system by providing parallel equipment that can be used while certain components of the system are offline for repair or for maintenance.

"5. The system design, redundancy, and operations and maintenance is capable of promptly correcting isolated fluctuations in water parameters if they should occur.

"6. Staffing is sufficient to ensure the proper functioning and maintenance of the water systems.

"7. Procedures are in place for operation of the water management systems and these procedures, at the request of Marineland, will be documented through standard operating procedures ... for all systems and processes."

Mr. Speaker, you can see that the reaction to the accusations—there was a CAZA accreditation study and then there was a Stantec study on the quality of water, and that seems to paint a good picture of what is currently being done at Marineland.

But this bill, really, originated because I think the government has reacted to what has happened in the media, and they commissioned their own study. They asked Dr. David Rosen to do a review. The purpose of the committee was:

"This committee was convened by the government of Ontario's Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in October 2013 to (1) evaluate Ontario's current regulations pertaining to the care of marine mammals in captivity for public display, (2) consider whether current regulations are sufficient to ensure the care of these marine mammals, and ... (3) suggest how existing regulations could be improved."

Additionally, the committee was asked to give special consideration to the welfare of cetaceans in public display facilities.

As I mentioned, it was Dr. David Rosen from British Columbia who was asked to do this study. In his executive summary on this report he states: "A review of the current scientific literature on the well-being of captive cetaceans highlighted several areas of concern. There are several aspects specific to the aquarium environment that can potentially cause stress in captive cetaceans, although none are unique to this group, and most can be mitigated through proper husbandry and habitat design. The most critical issues identified are the need for adequate pool space and design, appropriate social groups, and environmental enrichment. Additional concerns relate to suitable light and sound exposure in the habitat."

Now, I think it was the Attorney General, in her comments, who talked for a couple of minutes about the social nature of orcas, and that in the wild, they like to be in pods of five to 30. I note that that is also one of the concerns here. So I'm a little surprised that the bill that is before us would actually, really, sentence the one orca at Marineland to a solitary life for the rest of the life of that particular whale.

I do have a little bit of information on that whale; Kiska the whale. Kiska the orca whale lives in the largest pool housing a killer whale in the world. The pool is larger than the entire Toronto aquarium by volume—just her pool alone. All the water in her pool is filtered through a modern, computerized filtration system that costs tens of millions of dollars. All of the water in her pool is filtered every three hours. A thorough techno-

logical review of the entire water system was conducted by an independent expert company, Stantec—that's the review I referred to—which found that the system was fully capable of providing an appropriate aquatic environment for Kiska.

Kiska already has several times the available space SeaWorld's whales will have when SeaWorld has completed its expansion and full renovations in four years' time. Based on what SeaWorld actually builds, Kiska's space could be five and a half times as large.

Kiska does not participate in any shows and has not done so for over a decade. Kiska is cared for by experienced professional marine mammal veterinarians who examine her every single day. Her teeth are examined and rinsed every day. Kiska participates in a complex enrichment program that has been reviewed and approved by leading marine mammal scientists, and reviewed and accepted by the OSPCA.

Kiska is fed a healthy diet of fish fit for human consumption. Everything she eats is recorded. All her activities and behaviour are recorded hourly. Her health is monitored on a continuous basis. A team of veterinarians and staff determine all issues related to her health and make constant adjustments to ensure the ongoing health and care of Kiska.

Kiska is now quite elderly and prefers particular routines. Everyone knows that it would be a benefit to her to provide her with an age-appropriate companion, if one could be found. Currently, a companion for Kiska is not available. Prohibiting any possibility of providing Kiska with an age-appropriate companion is not necessary to give effect to the legislative intent and is not in the best interests of Kiska. That seems to be confirmed by the comment in the executive summary by Dr. Rosen, talking about "appropriate social groups."

Marineland is one of the few unique facilities that can provide a temporary home to injured marine mammals and a permanent home to those animals that cannot be returned to the wild. A ban consigns an injured orca to death unnecessarily and contrary to all sensible conservation efforts.

Something to think about is that this bill actually has some consequences for the one orca that is within the boundaries of the province of Ontario, which the legislation seems to be geared toward. It's interesting that we're debating this bill, with all the other challenges going on. I can't say it has come up much in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka.

An issue that has come up recently that is not marine-mammal-related—it is fish-related—has been the Almaguin Fish Improvement Association, a group of volunteers who have been stocking Ahmic and Cecebe lakes in my riding for the past 35 years. It really is, I think, a great group that is very dedicated to trying to improve the fishery, particularly in Ahmic and Cecebe lakes, but is also interested in stocking surrounding lakes as well. I've brought that issue up in the Legislature before: the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources had, until recently, told the Almaguin Fish Improvement Association that

they weren't going to issue them the permits to be able to do the stocking they had planned for this year.

1400

I'm pleased to say—and I want to give credit to the Minister of Natural Resources, the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan—that on Friday I attended a meeting with the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Almaguin Fish Improvement Association has been given the green light and will be getting the permits to do their stocking in Ahmic and Cecebe lakes this year. I'm very pleased about that.

I know they're a very dedicated group and are trying to do good work. I would say that the Ministry of Natural Resources should take advantage of this group of volunteers, because they have stated that they're willing to join the council for zone 15. They're willing to stock other lakes as well, and assist with rehabilitating spawning beds and doing other work that will improve the fisheries in Parry Sound—Muskoka. I'm very pleased that that has come to be.

Back to Bill 80, Mr. Speaker: Whatever new rules come out of this bill—obviously, we want to provide the best environment for marine mammals that are in captivity—I think it's important that we also realize that in probably one of the biggest businesses that deals with marine mammals, Marineland at Niagara Falls, there are 700 people who rely on their jobs to put food on the table and help pay their ever-increasing hydro bills. I think that's something the government should be taking into consideration as it brings forward Bill 80 for debate. That's something we can't lose sight of.

I do note that the majority of the public feel—I see that a poll was conducted in the *Toronto Sun*, March 23, 2015, and 89% of respondents agreed that Ontario should ban the importation of killer whales. I think that's probably generally supported, as it seems to be in the general public.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to have a chance to speak to Bill 80 this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to give my colleague in the Conservative caucus full credit for being on topic and having done some pretty good research on the issue.

Listen: Over the years, this Legislature has seen a number of times when we have tried to deal with issues related to how we care for animals in captivity, be it zoos, roadside zoos or, in this case, an aquarium. Clearly, there needs to be good regulation in place to ensure that animals that are in the care of these establishments are being taken care of in as humane a way as possible, and make sure that the animal, or mammal in this particular case, is not particularly distressed.

I want to talk about the aquarium that has the most seals and the most whales in Ontario, and that's James and Hudson bays. If anybody wants to come and watch a live whale in Ontario, there are whales in this province, and a lot of people forget that. We have belugas. All

along James and Hudson bays, you have beluga whales that are quite something to see.

At a particular time in the year, later on in July, you will see belugas that will gather at the mouths of rivers by the hundreds and the thousands eating up the fish as they come down the rivers and eating whatever feed they can get off the rivers as the water runs into James Bay or Hudson Bay.

You're talking about pretty big rivers. You're talking rivers bigger than most rivers you see here in southern Ontario. It's quite something to see. I've seen it myself, flying up on the James Bay. Especially north of Attawapiskat is where you tend to see most of them, but you'll see them as far down as the Moose River.

If you book at the Eco Lodge—call my friend Greg at 658-6400. You can book a beautiful room at the Eco Lodge, and at particular times of the year you're actually able to see belugas and seals that exist in the province of Ontario. I'm just here to say there are other ways to see these animals in the wild, and if you want to come to James Bay and Hudson Bay, we've got room for you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege and an honour to rise today and speak about Bill 80.

I want to tell you that in my opinion, Bill 80 is really about doing the right thing. We all know that marine mammals are complex, diverse and magnificent creatures with unique needs that require the right standards of care. If you've ever seen an orca or a killer whale out there in the wild, you will understand what I mean.

I have spent much time on the west coast of British Columbia and have spent many hours in boats actually at times being surrounded by orcas or killer whales, and I can tell you that there is nothing more amazing than to be surrounded by a pod, to see how they are matrilineal in their behaviour, and to watch them as they take care of each other and interact with each other socially and sensitively to those of us who are in the boat—and in some ways, feel like they are looking after us when you're out there on the ocean.

I feel that this bill really drives home the idea that we also have a responsibility of our own towards these magnificent mammals.

If Bill 80 would be passed, it would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales or killer whales in Ontario, and I really do think this is the right thing to do.

We've also introduced the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, Bill 80, because we want to make sure that we are putting the right kinds of programs in place to ensure that we are creating a framework to establish the right protections for marine mammals that are out there.

We would create a framework to establish animal welfare committees, for example, because this is going to be key in ensuring that we have in place rules that will look forward in terms of how, when these animals may

be in captivity, they are treated fairly, kindly and sensitively.

I feel very strongly about this bill, and I'm very pleased to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to provide some additional comments to my colleague the member from—

Mr. Norm Miller: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Parry Sound–Muskoka.

There are a number of issues with Bill 80 that raise some concerns with me. Of course, notwithstanding the example given with James Bay, we are talking about one orca, one animal. In part of Bill 80, subsection 11.4, we basically transfer the responsibility for oversight to the OSPCA: "An inspector or an agent of the society may, without a warrant, enter and inspect a building ... to determine whether the standards of care or administrative requirements prescribed ... are being complied with...."

I'm not a vet. I don't pretend to understand what is appropriate animal welfare. However, I do have some vets in the family. Most veterinarians who practise in the province of Ontario end up specializing. I actually have a member of my family, who does not practise in Ontario, who does fish pathology. He trained an additional two years to do that, and all he does is related to fish health, fish habitat.

I'm concerned: When we are talking about one animal, where are we going to find the necessary skills for someone to actually assess whether, in this case, Kiska at Marineland is being properly cared for? I don't think we can just leave it in the capable hands of the OSPCA because they're not looking at any other orcas. They will not have the necessary aptitude to be able to look at it and make the assessment and say yes or no. That's my concern with Bill 80.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka on his well-researched remarks.

As I was listening to the member, I was reflecting on the debate that we held in this Legislature not so long ago about the Making Healthier Choices Act. Many members stood up and talked about their own experience, sometimes as former smokers, sometimes as children of smokers, and how as a society we have evolved. Our thinking has evolved to the point where we recognize the harm that smoking causes and we have taken measures as a society, as legislators. As a result, rates of smoking have gone down.

1410

For me, this bill represents a similar evolution of our awareness of the pain and suffering that we are causing to orcas when we hold them in captivity simply for the purpose of entertaining us. Bill 80 is a bill that will increase the size of enclosures that orcas are held in, and it would also limit sound exposure for the animals. It would prohibit the possession and breeding of orcas in Ontario except for any orca already in captivity in March

2015, which, as we know, is a single orca, Kiska, who is being held at Marineland.

I really appreciated the comments from the member for Timmins–James Bay, who talked about the ways that we can see these animals in the wild and what a transformative experience it can be for us to see the majesty of these animals in their natural habitat. As a school board trustee, I've always wondered what we are teaching children when we tell them it's okay to put animals in captivity for our own entertainment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time we have available for questions and comments, and so I return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka for his response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members from London West, Dufferin–Caledon, Timmins–James Bay and—Kitchener Centre, I believe, was the other riding of the members who made comments.

Yes, the member from Timmins–James Bay certainly gave a very good sales pitch for his riding and for seeing whales in their natural environment, which certainly is the number one place to see them. He did a good job of talking about how you can fly into Moosonee or, I guess, take the train into Moosonee, and go across to Moose Factory where the Eco Lodge is located. I have stayed there one or two nights on committee business once. It's a great spot. It sounds like you can make arrangements to actually go out on the water of James Bay to get an opportunity to see whales in the wild, so that sounds like a great tourism opportunity for northern Ontario. I know how popular it is out in Newfoundland, the one place where I've had an opportunity to go out into the ocean to see whales in their natural environment.

Unfortunately, I can't make that pitch in Parry Sound–Muskoka. We do have some beautiful bodies of water—of course, Georgian Bay and the many, many lakes of Parry Sound–Muskoka—but there are no whales in Parry Sound–Muskoka. There are lots of other good reasons to come to visit, though, so I'd certainly encourage everyone to visit Parry Sound–Muskoka and enjoy kayaking up Georgian Bay or whatever else might be of interest to you.

I think the member from Dufferin–Caledon certainly raised some concerns with regard to the expertise that might not be within the OSPCA in dealing with this, as this bill deals with the one orca that is in captivity within the boundaries of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the chance to speak to this bill brought forward by the government, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act. This bill deals with issues of animals in captivity, with a particular and specific reference to orcas, or, as they're often called, killer whales.

Speaker, in Ontario we have many facilities where wild animals are kept captive. Many families have enjoyed a day out with them. We and our kids can get a

chance to see and learn about animals that we are likely never to see in their natural habitat. By seeing and meeting these animals in the flesh and learning more about them, many people, we believe, generally become more understanding of the part a species plays in making our world tick, and this, as a result, raises a broader concern for the well-being of all animals.

They point to the research that is done and breeding programs to protect and enhance endangered species, but unfortunately that is not always the case. There are around 50 or 60 zoos and aquariums in Ontario, but less than 10 of them are accredited by the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For the rest, there is little of them to be governed.

While seeing these exotic animals can be fun and interesting, it cannot compare to seeing them in the wild. Speaker, while I visit Florida, I always take a deep-sea-fishing trip. Probably one of the best parts of that trip is watching the dolphins as they swim and play in the waves that our boat is making. Now, of course, dolphins aren't good for fishing, because we know you're not catching a fish when there's a dolphin around, but watching them as they are out in their own natural habitat, swimming and jumping just as if you were watching them in Marineland or wherever—the experience is completely different. Knowing that they're doing all of these fun, playful acts out in their own habitat is absolutely amazing.

The fact is that when animals or marine mammals are confined to a space in a zoo or an aquarium, they are captive. They aren't free to be themselves, to roam, to find their own food and to engage in social relationships.

As I mentioned, this bill makes specific reference to killer whales. Passing this bill will make it illegal to possess or breed an orca in Ontario, with two exceptions. In the case of an orca that was in captivity before the bill was introduced, the orca will be allowed to remain where it is. In the case of a person who possesses an orca after the introduction of this bill but before it is passed into law, the person can keep the orca for another six months after the bill receives royal assent.

Let's think for a second what the natural life of a killer whale is like. They live in pods of two to 30 whales, sometimes as many as 50, and they swim up to 100 miles in a day. They prefer deep water, dive to depths of 500 feet, and usually spend 10% to 20% of their time at the surface. Some killer whales stay with their families for their lives as they travel in pods and sometimes join other pods for hunting or socializing. Each pod has its own dialect for communicating.

If we think about that, we're saying here that they live in pods of two to 30 whales, sometimes as many as 50, and they swim up to 100 miles a day. How could that possibly happen when we're keeping them out of their natural habitat and we're keeping them hostage for our own fun and entertainment? I'm sorry. I'm sorry that we, as a people, have decided that it's okay to do that to animals. I'll be happy for the day when that doesn't happen any longer.

They are complicated creatures who need a huge amount of space. As much as we like to see them, we have a responsibility to consider whether we can justify keeping them captive and in an enclosed space such as an aquarium.

The member from Timmins–James Bay talked about the beluga whales that you can see if you go to James Bay. This summer, I was actually planning a trip that would take me to Tadoussac, which is just on the other side of Quebec and the St. Lawrence. You can go there and you can see the whales in their own nature and their own space. I'm so looking forward to that day when I can watch the whales being in their own environment. I just think it will be quite magnificent to watch those amazing creatures.

The University of Guelph Animal Interest Network has this to say about the pros and cons of zoos, and I think this can be extended to aquariums:

"Zoos have the benefit of educating the public about species and the problems they face in their native environments. They also serve as a source of revenue to fund conservation efforts. They serve as an emotional bridge for people to feel connected with animals and to better appreciate them. Zoos also serve as havens of protection for species who face insecurity in their homelands. They also allow people to study given animals in an environment where they can be easily observed.

"However, zoos also have their drawbacks. Zoos will never be able to completely replicate a given species' natural environment (especially in terms of space for larger animals). The degree to which some zoos contribute to education or conservation is debatable. Captive animals become acclimated to living among humans and are dependent on them for survival, making it difficult to return to the wild. With endangered species, it is difficult managing breeding programs in zoos. Capturing wild animals to live in zoos also depletes the wild population, disrupting social structures in native animal collectives and possibly contributing to their insecurity."

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This bill has taken quite some time to get to this Legislature. In the summer of 2012, the Toronto Star ran a series of articles about the treatment of marine mammals at Marineland in Niagara Falls, and a petition of 77,000 signatures had been presented to the Premier. In response, in October 2012, the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services said that the government would be introducing legislation in the spring. I assumed at the time that she meant the following spring, as most people did. I suppose she should have checked in with the Premier at the time because, within five days, he undemocratically shut down the Legislature and announced that he'd be running away from the mess that he created under his watch.

With the Legislature shutting down and the Liberals preoccupied with their internal shifting around of the deck chairs, I can understand why she didn't manage to introduce the legislation the following spring, but she could have at least got things moving. That October of

2012, she seemed to have an idea of where the government was headed. At the time, an article in the media said, "The Ontario government vowed Wednesday to strengthen its animal welfare laws following allegations of mistreatment of animals at one of the province's amusement parks.

"Community Safety Minister Madeleine Meilleur said the province plans to introduce legislation by the spring that will beef up regulations to ensure the safety and health of animals kept in zoos and aquariums, including Marineland."

A year later, in October 2013, the same minister did get around to appointing a committee headed up by David Rosen, a marine mammal expert at the University of British Columbia. According to their report—this is a quote: "This committee was convened by the government of Ontario's Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in October 2013 to (1) evaluate Ontario's current regulations pertaining to the care of marine mammals in captivity for public display, (2) consider whether current regulations are sufficient to ensure the care of these marine mammals, and, if not, to (3) suggest how existing regulations could be improved. Additionally, the committee was asked to (4) give special consideration to the welfare of cetaceans in public display facilities."

The committee submitted its final report in May of last year and has apparently provided the basis for some of the changes to come. The purpose talks about regulation rather than legislation, and a lot of the meat of any changes will be covered in regulation. So when this bill passes, the people of Ontario will be watching to see what those regulations are and whether or not they are sufficient.

The committee left no doubt that changes were certainly needed. To quote them again: "While we have given special consideration to the welfare of captive cetaceans according to the objectives set forth for the committee, we have considered all marine mammals in our review of existing regulations. It is our opinion that the present standards of care that apply to marine mammals in public display facilities are insufficient under the current Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. It is our opinion, based upon our review of the regulations and the available scientific evidence, that adequate care in captivity requires the adoption of an additional set of standards of care to address needs specific to this group of animals."

The regulations to follow will provide rules regarding the keeping and caring of other marine mammals, such as walrus and dolphins, but only orcas will be banned. Other whales such as belugas will be able to be held captive in Ontario aquariums.

Many people in Ontario enjoy the experience of going to an aquarium. The delight on the faces of adults and children alike is unmistakable, but there is also a significant number of our population who are deeply concerned about the treatment experienced by those marine mammals. We, in the NDP, believe those attractions can thrive if the viewing public feels assured that effective

rules and good governance are in place, rules that are grounded in science and animal welfare.

The committee recommends that each facility must have an animal welfare committee that is responsible for all aspects of animal care and how they are used. They point out that it is important that the committee includes an external expert on marine mammals.

While the committee would report to the administrator of the facility, it must be fully independent of the administrator. That, I would say, is absolutely essential. Any animal welfare committee must have animal welfare as its number one priority and must be free to investigate and report without any fear of repercussion.

Dr. Rosen's report suggested that a whistleblower policy written and posted at the facility would be helpful to the animal welfare committee's work so that any concerns raised by staff about animal care are addressed and recorded properly.

The report offered other recommendations, including:

- an up-to-date provincial inventory of all animals, that includes lineage, acquisitions, births and deaths with causes when known, should be kept;

- a written veterinary care program should be developed in collaboration with veterinary experts and including a protocol for preventative medicine;

- water supply should, at all times, be reliable, with chlorine levels and bacterial counts that meet provincial standards;

- proper noise restrictions and appropriate light levels should be enforced; and

- there should be regulations on the handling and display of marine mammals and provisions for social and environmental enrichment.

Speaker, I want to talk for a minute about the idea of the provincial inventory in the broader context of exotic animals. Earlier I mentioned that a few of Ontario's zoos are accredited by the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums. In addition to those accredited facilities, we have many more that are often called "roadside zoos." These are smaller facilities that can house lions, tigers, monkeys and other assorted animals that are aren't native to Ontario or Canada, but, for some reason, they have no laws to govern how they operate or how animals are controlled. We don't even require owners to have a licence. We require dog owners to have a licence, but not a lion owner. That seems unbelievable, and I think it's completely unacceptable.

This isn't a new matter by any stretch of the imagination. The member from Brant raised concerns about this a few years back and introduced a private member's bill to address it. Unfortunately, that bill didn't make it past first reading.

It is illegal in Ontario to keep native species as pets: foxes, squirrels, wolves—those types of animals. But when it comes to exotic animals, there is nothing unless a municipality has passed a bylaw that outlaws the keeping of those non-native species. Like I said, Speaker, lions and tigers and bears, oh my. There is nothing that stops people, unless the particular municipality has something

to prohibit the keeping of them. So I think that's something that needs to be looked at.

A couple of years ago, it was reported that of Ontario's 444 municipalities, less than 70 had a bylaw relating to the ownership of exotic animals. Even in those that do have a bylaw, the public is often very unaware of it.

In 2012, there was a media report from Muskoka of a cougar on the loose. One resident heard her dog yelping, and when she went to investigate, she saw a cougar with its teeth sunk into her pet husky. The police were called, who shot the cougar dead, but it was too late to save her dog, which had to be put down that night.

The dead cougar was taken to the University of Guelph for an autopsy. What they discovered was that this animal had most certainly been in captivity. It was well-fed and had been de-clawed. But there was no way to tell where it came from. There was a roadside zoo near where the attack had happened—a small facility with six lions, one jaguar and two cougars—but the owner strongly denied that the cougar that was on the loose was his.

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Just across the road from the zoo, another resident had a small dog-breeding operation. Every year, that facility had to be inspected. All the dogs are microchipped, so that if one does wander off, the owner always knows where it is and how to get it back. Why would we have stronger restrictions on dogs than we do on tigers?

There have been other reports of totally inadequate fencing at some of those roadside zoos, and indeed, some humans have died as a result. Between 1985 and 2010, there were media reports of 11 separate tiger escapes and four lion incidents. That is the strange, uncontrolled world of animals in captivity that we have, living here in Ontario today. In this, Ontario is the outlier in Canada. We are the only province that lacks legislation regarding the ownership of exotic animals.

Across Canada, the laws vary from province to province. In Alberta and PEI, it is illegal to own a pet that is considered to be dangerous. In British Columbia, they maintain a list of controlled alien species that includes the types of animals I have discussed. If you want to own an animal that's on that list, you have to apply for a permit. But only in Ontario is there nothing in place to record and control the ownership of exotic animals. It's time that we did something here in Ontario to bring some common sense to our laws regarding exotic animals.

In closing, we see this bill before us, we know that it's an important bill and we know that we need to do something regarding our orcas, captivity, how we go about that, how we do that and how we maintain jobs at Marineland, because it is a wonderful place to bring your family, right? We all know that. Like I said earlier in my speech, when I was a child, I skipped to Marineland. I was so excited to see the whales, the dolphins and all the wonderful animals that are there. Going to the Toronto zoo, of course, I tiptoed through that a little bit more, because there are snakes and stuff like that throughout that wonderful place.

But we have to have something in place to ensure that all these wonderful creatures we have in captivity that are there for our enjoyment, unless they're there as a rescue or they're being treated because they can't be sent back into the wild—it's our responsibility to make sure that people are getting it right, that they're making sure that their levels are adequate and their habitats are appropriate. It's our responsibility as legislators to make sure we get it right.

We know this has been going on for a long time in Ontario, and it's time to make sure that we put things in place to ensure the safety of all animals, whether it be a rare species of toad or frog that we can see at the Ontario Science Centre, or a large orca that we travel to Marineland to see. I think the member from James Bay said it best: Take a ride up to the north and see the belugas in their own space and enjoy them there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm happy to stand here and add a few comments to Bill 80, which is being put forward by the government at this time. I listened carefully to my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. She made reference to the work that the government has already done in overhauling the OSPCA Act.

I would just remind everybody in this chamber that when that was done in 2009, it was something that was being done for the first time in generations. The minister of the day was implementing stronger animal protection and stiffer penalties, including jail terms, fines and potential lifetime ownership bans, for those animals that were abused at the time. It enabled the OSPCA to inspect places where animals were kept for entertainment, exhibition, boarding, sale or hire.

I would say to you that this is the next step in protecting animals in our province, and especially, in this case, mammals. As we know, animal welfare is a key priority of the government. Marine mammals are very complex. They are diverse, and they are magnificent creatures, as was described both by the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Timmins-James Bay, inviting us up to his area so we could view it firsthand. This is why the recently introduced OSPCA Act was amended, and we're amending it again, this time to try and improve the controls that we have out there.

This particular act will probably create some of the strongest standards in Canada. We're looking forward to the support of all members who sit in this House so that this bill will go through very quickly and be adopted in law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise and make a few comments to the member from Hamilton Mountain, who had a very thorough overview of this bill, and of course of marine mammals in particular, and other animals that are kept in captivity.

I too have visited a number of these institutions over the years: Marineland, and there were a couple of others.

I was too young and it was too long ago to remember. I'm getting a little short in memory now. I've always thought that we should probably have more control. I have a lot of concerns from stories in the news media as time went on, and probably it's time for something like this.

I was very interested when the member for Timmins—James Bay talked about how we actually—I'll tell you, I learned something there. I didn't realize that these kinds of mammals were in the wild in Canada, in James Bay and Hudson Bay. It's certainly an eye-opener for me, and I intend to take him up on that sometime. I'd like to go up there—not in the winter, obviously. But when the weather is a little nicer, I'd certainly like to go up and see these animals at play. I think that's probably a hidden secret that a lot of people don't know about and is probably something that the member for Timmins—James Bay should talk a little more about and promote here in this House so that some of us members, when summer rolls around, could take a trip up there and actually go and see them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's an honour for me to rise and offer some thoughts about the remarks that were given to us by the member for Hamilton Mountain.

As she spoke about roadside zoos, I was reminded of my own experience as a parent volunteer when my daughter was in grade 1, I think it was. For the end-of-year school trip, we visited a roadside zoo, which was the saddest, most disturbing experience that I have had as a parent: to see those poor, tattered, sad-looking animals confined in dirty cages—no oversight, no educational value to the experience. I really worried about what kind of message we were conveying to the children who were on this class trip.

The member for Hamilton Mountain talked about the widespread concern that exists within Ontario about the humane treatment of animals, and marine animals in particular. One of the cautions I have about this amended act is that it provides for some care standards around the use of marine animals such as walruses and dolphins, but it continues to allow other animals, such as belugas, to be held captive in marine parks and aquariums.

I would hope that marine parks and aquariums in this province take some lessons from what we have done in London with Storybook Gardens, which has been a well-known attraction within our city for years. Some of you may be familiar with the iconic story of Slippery the Seal from the 1950s. Storybook Gardens has eliminated any animals in captivity in that attraction, and that is a lesson that I hope other marine parks and animal parks will follow.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments from the member from Hamilton Mountain. I'm encouraged, actually, by the support I hear about the

House for this bill. I do hear what she said in terms of exotic animals and other animals in captivity. I think that there has to be a balance that exists out there with the humane treatment of animals to what our needs are. A number of the members commented on the educational purposes of things like aquariums and zoos. So it's important for us to create that balance.

I think the bill here does talk about creating a regulatory framework for marine mammals. I think that that's very important. I do believe that places like Marineland—I mentioned in previous comments that my oldest daughter, Kirsten, who's now 36, is still holding me to a promise to take her to Marineland, and I've had to make that commitment; I'm making it again today in Hansard, if you're out there, Kirsten.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: And for your grandson.

Mr. John Fraser: And for my grandson, Vaughan; yes, that's true.

But we have to make sure that the balance that exists there is that we are treating them as we would treat each other. We share this planet with the animal kingdom. The member made a comment about how we can't bring our own native animals into captivity; I had some experience with that with a baby deer that was brought into a home just outside the riding and what followed on that. That deer was being treated very humanely, but there was an outcome to that. The important thing is to focus on how, as the government, we did put forward legislation. We did put stiffer penalties in. We are doing this. It's continual work to make sure that we are treating animals humanely and that we hold people to account. I appreciate the members' comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All right. That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain for her reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough—Rouge River and Sarnia—Lambton, my seatmate from London West and the member from Ottawa South. Some really great comments have been made. The member from Scarborough—Rouge River talked about 2009, when protection was brought forward. Again, we have protection in 2015. The member from Ottawa South talked about how it's continued work. So I hope that it is continued work and that we really do look at how we're governing and how we're overseeing these zoos and aquariums.

Like I said, we have 50 to 60 zoos and aquariums across Ontario, and only 10 of them are accredited by the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums. I think that's very concerning.

The member from London West talked about a field trip with her daughter when she was young, going to a roadside zoo. I did go to one of those roadside zoos not too far from my riding when my daughter was quite young, and I swore I would never go back there again. It was absolutely horrific to see those animals haggard and just really not well kept at all. I think that if we had stronger penalties and if we were on top of the inspections and making sure that these animals that we're

keeping for our entertainment are loved and nourished and treated the way we would expect our home pets to be, then that would be a better day.

I'm happy to see that we're moving forward, that we're building into legislation and regulation new ways to ensure that animals—like I said, whether they're a toad that we see at an Ontario conservation area or whether they're a wonderful, beautiful orca and dolphin that we're seeing at Marineland, that they're being well cared for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to debate Bill 80 in this Legislature. I'll be sharing my time with the members from Kitchener Centre, Scarborough—Agincourt and the Minister of Education. I'm very pleased to hear all of the support for this bill in this Legislature. I know that, if passed, Bill 80 would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario. Additionally, the bill will create a framework to establish an animal welfare committee, as recommended in the UBC report.

I must share with this House that not too long ago I watched a documentary that talked about orca whales, actually, in comparison to great white sharks. Scientists observed a rare scene of an orca whale holding a great white shark upside down and hunting it as its prey. Later on, the scientists found out that if you place sharks upside down you put them in tonic immobility. Basically, they pass out. Somehow the orca whale found out about that and used it as a very effective technique to hunt down these great white sharks.

What is even more fascinating is that they develop this hunting culture and pass it on to the next generation. So the hunting culture of one pod could be very different from the hunting culture of another.

We've all heard about the orca rushing the seals onto the beach in order to capture them. That hunting culture is very, very different. That proves to us, again, that orcas are highly social and smart, and they are truly beautiful animals.

We can learn so much about them in the wild. I fully appreciate the fact that we are given this opportunity to see them when they are in captivity, but what we get out of it is very superficial: their appearance, their movement, the fact that they can learn from us, they can move, they can respond to their trainers. But we lose the opportunity to learn how they talk to each other, how they pass on their knowledge and how they hunt as group. All these wonderful things could be observed in nature.

I must confess that I, too, was fascinated by orcas and was paying to be entertained. Now I think back, and it was somewhat superficial, because under the surface of this lovely scene of everyone enjoying with their kids, with their families, the performance by an orca, there is a cruel fact. The cruel fact is that they're in captivity, whether it's the stress, the chemicals in the water, the noise from the audience, it is, in fact, shortening their lifespan. I think that cruelty is something we don't want to promote and pass on to our next generation.

I'm extremely proud of the government and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for introducing this bill, and I'm very happy to hear all the support in the House. I think that we're elected to pursue a just, fair and sustainable society, and this is our opportunity to show our kids, and many generations to come, our respect for a way of life and for life itself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to enter this discussion today on Bill 80, amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. If it is passed, these amendments are going to ban the possession or breeding of additional orcas in Ontario. That would be effective immediately. It would introduce penalties of up to \$60,000 and/or two years in jail for breaching this law, and it would allow the government to recommend administrative rules for animal care and record-keeping for businesses that do have marine mammals.

It should be noted that Ontario currently does have the strongest animal protection laws in Canada, and we would be the first jurisdiction in our country to set standards of care for marine mammals when these amendments are introduced this summer.

So what exactly are we talking about? These amendments target the size of the tanks that are used to house marine mammals. They also look at the environmental conditions, like the water quality, the noise and the lighting, that these creatures must live with. It considers social groupings, and the way they are handled and displayed to the public.

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We have heard some of the special features of orcas, and I'd like to stress them again. They are the largest of all marine mammals that are kept in captivity. They range from six to nine metres in length and four to seven tonnes in size. They can dive as deep as 500 feet or more. They can swim up to 100 miles per day. In the wild, orcas travel in pods of five to 30 whales, although some pods do combine to form larger groups of 100 whales or even larger.

But, Mr. Speaker, the practice of keeping killer whales in captivity is considered controversial by many. At aquariums and amusement parks around the world, there are currently 57 orcas in captivity, and here in Canada we have one at Marineland.

These exhibitions first started in the early 1960s when killer whales were captured in their natural habitat. Live captures peaked in the early 1970s, but many theme parks now maintain their population with captive breeding and artificial insemination.

These mammals are highly intelligent. They're easily trained and they appear to have no natural predators, as they are at the top of the food chain in their natural habitat. They're very social animals with sophisticated behaviour, vocal abilities and hunting skills.

But in captivity we've seen many issues with their health and their behaviour. Orcas in captivity can experi-

ence dorsal fin collapse. We see this in 100% of all captive males and also with female whales. The dorsal fin—this is the fin that protrudes on the back—is held erect by collagen. Scientists with the National Marine Fisheries Service have reported that the possible reasons for the fin collapse include changes in the water bacteria caused by the dietary changes when they're in captivity; they're getting less activity in a confined space and this is lowering blood pressure; and overheating of the collagen when the dorsal fin is exposed to air.

We have heard of attacks on humans by orcas housed in aquatic theme parks. Since the 1970s, nearly two dozen people and trainers have been attacked by killer whales. Some of these attacks have resulted in deaths. This aggressive behaviour includes ramming in the water, biting during feeding or holding a person under water. Studies of killer whales reveal that this aggressive behaviour is tied to confinement. When a highly intelligent creature which lives in a complex social group is separated from its family and then faces a lifetime confined to a concrete tank which does not resemble its natural order, should we be surprised by this aggressive behaviour?

The new standards of care that we're talking about are based on recommendations made in a University of British Columbia report. It was prepared by a team of scientists led by Dr. David Rosen, who is a well-known marine biologist. We also have a technical advisory group, which includes experts in science, industry, advocacy and enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, there are questions surrounding Canada's Marineland, which houses marine mammals. We recognize the importance of this attraction in the Niagara Falls area as a tourist draw, and it contributes greatly to the local economy, so it's very encouraging to see Marineland's willingness to work with us as we move forward to ensuring best standards for care of these magnificent creatures.

I want to conclude with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, who said, "The greatness of a nation ... can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Our government is committed to protecting orcas that are currently in captivity; again, you heard that it's just one, Kiska, at Marineland. We also want to show leadership concerning these great creatures as we move forward with Bill 80.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to add my voice to support Bill 80. As my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River said earlier, our government is committed to animal welfare as one of our priorities. I want to tell the audience who is watching here today as well as my colleagues here in the chamber the history of this particular legislation.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Kitchener Centre talked about the technical advisory group that is providing advice to the government in terms of the whole issue of animal welfare. But going back to 2009, our government has been implementing stronger animal protection legislation and stiffer penalties, including jail time, fines

and potential lifetime ownership bans for those who abuse animals.

We have put additional oversight and rules in place for roadside zoos.

We also required veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect and introduced measures to protect them from liability for doing so. We've heard that from time to time veterinarians have to report suspected abuse—because we know there's a relationship between animal abuse and abuse of women as well as children.

We also enabled the OSPCA to inspect places where animals are kept for entertainment, exhibition, boarding, sale or hire. We have heard those nightmarish stories on the front pages of newspapers from time to time. Giving extra authority to the OSPCA for inspections and furthering their ability to do their job is the right thing to do.

We also introduced additional penalties for those harming law enforcement service animals, such as dogs and horses; again, protecting animal welfare.

In 2012, the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who is now the Attorney General, set out a framework to further strengthen animal welfare enforcement with a three-point plan: to improve province-wide enforcement of animal protection measures in the OSPCA Act, as well as strengthen the governance of the OSPCA; we also considered options for tougher inspections and registration of zoos and aquariums, because we have heard, although it's just one orca out there, there are other animals we are talking about every day—because most of us in this chamber have animals in our own families, right? They're part of the family. So at the end of the day, yes, there's conversation about one orca—animal welfare across the province, Mr. Speaker. And we have also created new regulations to further protect marine mammals in captivity.

Since that time, our government has been busy in terms of consulting but more importantly creating legislation to protect animal welfare. The proposed legislation, if passed, will strengthen animal protection across the entire province. Furthermore, there's also a big portion of this particular bill that talks about enforcement, because at the end of the day, you can have all kinds of legislation but without the teeth of enforcement it's going to be problematic for those officers of the court.

I'm going to encourage all members of this Legislature not just to support the bill but to bring this bill to a committee so we can have further consultation and bring this bill back for third reading before we recess for the summer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to rise and participate in the debate on Bill 80 this afternoon.

If passed, Bill 80 would prohibit the future breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario. It would also create a framework to establish animal welfare committees, as recommended in one of the research reports that we received.

The committees would ensure the planning, protection and oversight for the marine mammals' care, and that would include animal care plans, access to veterinarians with expertise in marine mammals which, as the member from Dufferin-Caledon mentioned, is nontrivial—trying to find people who specialize in marine mammals—and finally enhanced record-keeping.

We've already actually established a technical advisory group of scientific experts, industry enforcement and advocacy experts to give advice on what these standards of care should look like. If Bill 80 passes, the plan would be that the proposed standards would be publicly posted for comment. Again, if the legislation is passed, then we would hope that we would have the regulatory support for that, the detailed standards of care, for the summer of 2015. Then facilities in Ontario which do hold marine mammals would need to come into line with the new standards, with enforcement going to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act.

So let me tell you a little bit about what we are thinking about with the new standards for marine mammals. Of course, marine mammals come in a variety of sizes. So we're dealing with quite a range of animals that show up in various sorts of aquariums around the province.

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In October 2003, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, which has responsibility for the OSPCA, asked David Rosen, a marine biologist from the University of British Columbia, to lead a team of experts to prepare a report on the care and maintenance of marine mammals in captivity. Anybody who is interested can go to the ministry website and have a look at the report for themselves, but some of the highlights: first of all, the observation that "Facilities that hold marine mammals must meet their physical and psychological environmental needs." When we're thinking about animal care standards, we usually put an emphasis on physical standards, but we understand when we're dealing with marine mammals that we're dealing with very intelligent, sophisticated, social creatures, so we need to think about their behavioural requirements, not just their physical requirements. For example, in the environment in which marine mammals live, they need to have sufficient space for species-appropriate behaviour such as swimming and playing and interacting with each other. I think one of my colleagues talked earlier about the issues around quality of water supply, because if you live in water; obviously the water quality is integral to good health. But if you're going to hold these animals in captivity, you really do need to think about what they are going to do. They aren't just going to swim around in a circle all day. They actually do need to have the ability, as much as possible, to interact as they would in the wild.

For those of us who have had the pleasure of going whale watching on either the Pacific coast or the Atlantic coast—and one I hadn't thought of, the Hudson Bay and James Bay coasts, so we'll add that to where we should go whale watching—what you often see when you go

whale watching isn't just one whale, but a pod of whales, and how they interact, mother and baby or just a group of whales. So how do you arrange for that sort of treatment in some sort of an aquarium?

We also need to think about the safety of the general public, particularly if these are large marine mammals, because these are large animals and they can do harm to other creatures. We just heard about how orcas can outsmart sharks, but they're also smart enough to outsmart people. So we need to figure out how you handle the safety requirements for the audience.

But the UBC report gave us some direction around how we would have new standards for marine mammals such as dolphins, beluga whales, walrus, those sorts of marine mammals. I think generally you could summarize those as standards for the size of pools, which would be very species-specific, environmental considerations such as water bacterial content, noise and lighting, regulations for the feeding, care, handling and display of the mammals, and, as I said before, sufficiently large facilities so that you can have social interactions taking place among the animals.

Those are the things that we would be looking at coming out of this act with respect to the animals that would be allowed to be held in captivity in future, which is the marine mammal species other than the orca, the killer whale, which comes into a different category where we would be banning captivity in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to add my comments to all those who spoke on this issue across the floor, and I've taken some interesting notes on what has been said.

If you were in the farming business, as I was at one time, you'd work out the square footage per animal—this was all engineered stuff. You'd work out how much room a pig needs or a cow needs, or whatever, to be successful. I'm certain that this could be done for these creatures we have in Marineland, or such places. We could study their habitats and certainly know what they would require to be healthy and content. I'm afraid those figures would scare the daylight out of you, because these animals want to be in the sea. They want wide open spaces.

I did listen with interest to those who have been lucky enough to go to the coasts and watch whales in their natural habitat. I got to thinking: When you're watching whales, you're searching around in the ocean, and you come across the pod. Some of them are going to take off on you. I have seen pictures of people watching whales, chasing these whales, who are trying to get away, because they don't want to be watched; they want to live in their own private world. Sometimes I've seen pictures where there are baby whales with them and mothers are trying to protect them, and yet the whale-watchers are still chasing them and trying to get pictures of them. Maybe that's something we should consider that should be curbed—doing those types of things—when we talk about the welfare of animals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and, today, speak on Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, specifically regarding orca whales.

I have listened intently. Most of the members—the members from Kitchener Centre, Scarborough—Agincourt and the Minister of Education—brought up a similar theme, and it struck me as poignant in another area: Orcas are highly intelligent, potentially aggressive and need enough room to be socially active. They need to have interaction with other animals of their own species. That's how they live best.

I agree. I'm not opposing this bill. If you really think that through, it perhaps answers the question why we have trouble when our prisons are overcrowded. We also are fairly aggressive and highly intelligent, and sometimes we wonder why, when people come out of our penal system, they aren't rehabilitated. Well, I think, on the other side, they're answering the question. As we look at orcas, we should also—this is a different issue; I'm very much aware of that. But as we look at orcas, we should also look at people and see what we could be doing better to make sure that people interact better among each other, and that is one of the cases that many people face. Also, a lot of people in lower-income brackets get very frustrated because there is no way out.

We can talk about orcas in the abstract, because, for many of us, it is in the abstract—it's a very important issue. But for most of us, people aren't in the abstract, and I think we should think of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Let me begin by thanking all those who have spoken on this bill this afternoon, and offer my congratulations to our Minister Naqvi for bringing forward this legislation, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, or Bill 80, which would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario.

Speaker, I think that the minister has struck on a good piece of legislation here. He has struck a chord. I think it is likely—I don't know for sure—a piece of legislation that is going to receive all-party support. We'll look forward to seeing if that is the case, and we would look forward to hopefully seeing this legislation passed, because I think it has struck a chord, not just here, but in the broader public sector.

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Speaker, one of the things you first learn, at least I certainly did, when you are first elected to public office—1997 for me, to city council in Thunder Bay—is that when it comes to issues related to animals, people tend to be more passionate. They tend to be more vocal. They tend to better attend public sessions, I would say, than on a host of other issues that you might think might garner that kind of attention. There is something, when it

comes to issues related to animals and animal welfare, that really sparks an interest in people. There is a relationship between people and animals that is sometimes difficult to put into words, but it's there. We all feel it, we all know it, we've all had those experiences, and I think we can see this in this legislation, so I congratulate our minister for bringing it forward.

I would say, as well, that this is not the first issue that we have really brought forward when it comes to issues related to animal welfare in the province of Ontario. There's a long list of things, going back as far as 2009, when we amended the OSPCA Act and brought in a new host of regulatory and legislative changes that speak to our interest in animal welfare in the province of Ontario. This is another one of them, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Certainly this legislation does strike a bit of a chord amongst some members of the general public. I assume this was done by design or would be the reason for introducing legislation like this. There's a lot of emotion involved in these kinds of discussions.

Here we are on the cusp of yet another provincial budget coming forward. We're not talking about the budget; we're talking about marine mammals. I do find this a little passing strange. Most of the focus is on the killer whale, which is a marine mammal, but that's really a very small component of this legislation. I know members opposite are playing to the audience out there, but much of the impact of this bill goes beyond one killer whale down in the Niagara Falls area. Much of the impact will be found in the regulation. The regulation is not explained to us. It obviously will expand the powers of the minister considerably.

Over a number of decades now—we debate legislation in here. We don't debate regulation, by and large. By and large, elected members don't travel the province explaining to people what is in the regulation. We have an awful lot of regulation. It seems to vary from 365,000 up to 500,000 different regulatory powers in the province of Ontario, and the concern is that regulation is brought in to take decision-making power away from people who probably should be taking the responsibility on themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education, to reply.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Perth-Wellington and Haldimand-Norfolk, the Minister of Natural Resources and the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for their remarks. I was struck by the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane speaking about the effects of captivity on all sorts of mammals, including humans. I suppose maybe that's why we focus particularly on the negative effects of solitary confinement on individuals. When we look at prisons, hopefully they're designed so that there actually is at least part or all of the day when people can socialize and have opportunities to exercise, learn a trade or something. If we're really going to re-

habilitate people, it isn't by locking them in one little cell.

Certainly with land mammals, when you look at the larger land mammals in zoos, there are issues around: Can they have access to behaving like they would normally behave? Polar bears or the large apes: Do they get to socialize in ways that are normal? That is the logic particularly for pulling out the orcas from most of the legislation, where generally what we're talking about is regulating the standards for captivity for marine mammals. Just to put it in perspective, orcas, or killer whales, are twice the length and four times the mass of a beluga whale, and could easily swim from Toronto to Belleville in the course of a day. The natural habitat of this huge creature is something that's very difficult to duplicate in captivity, and that's why, if Bill 80 is passed, we would prohibit the future breeding and acquisition of orcas in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2015. I've had the opportunity to look over Bill 80, which is relatively short in length compared to many government bills that we have here from time to time. It appears to be fairly straightforward in what it is trying to achieve, which is not always the case with government and the legislation that it puts forward.

I do have some concerns with the way this bill has been drafted by the government in that it seems to leave out some important details, leaving those particular matters to be sorted out later in the regulation-setting process. As we always say, the devil is in the details. This is not an uncommon practice for legislation and not a major concern of mine if this bill only impacted the prohibition of orca whales. But the way this legislation is being amended, it leaves open the possibility that other individuals with care or custody of animals could find themselves impacted by these changes down the road.

That raises some concern for me, as although the main intent of the bill is obviously to end the captivity of orca whales in Ontario, I always wonder what the unintended consequence of creating all sorts of new regulations, enforcement mechanisms and powers will be, especially for a group like the OSPCA which, at times, has generated much criticism from the public in Ontario for its actions.

I would also like to point out that while this bill does address an issue that is always sure to garner a lot of media attention, in my opinion it may not be the best use of time in this House.

In my time as the MPP for the riding of Sarnia-Lambton, I have received thousands of phone calls and emails about many issues that are significantly impacting the lives of those in my riding, issues like the ongoing problems with family law and the Family Responsibility Office; the hoops they are forced to jump through for support programs like ODSP and Ontario Works; the ever-increasing cost of electricity; a stagnant provincial

economy; and a sense that the quality of government services, like health care and education, continues to erode, especially in communities outside of the GTA like Sarnia-Lambton. They're concerned that this government just doesn't care about what happens in our corner of the province.

I could be wrong, but I don't recall a single phone call or email from one of my constituents asking for an immediate prohibition on the possession of orca whales.

Anyone who has ever seen one of these majestic whales would agree that a man-made enclosure is no place for this type of beast to live. The debate on the actual benefits of having any species in captivity at a zoo or in an aquarium could certainly fill many hours in this Legislature, but I don't know how many people would see this matter as the most pressing issue for debate.

Speaking on behalf of my constituents, I would ask that this bill be moved through the House as quickly as possible so that government could then use what time is left in this session to get back to focusing on the tough issues that will have the greatest benefit on this province and its future. As such, I will be supporting this bill at second reading.

However, back to the specifics of Bill 80, I would like to touch on two major ideas in this bill, orca prohibition and standards of care, and some of the basic points that I feel are important to this debate and for the decision-making of this House when considering this bill.

On the matter of orca prohibitions, Bill 80 amends the OSPCA Act to include the definition of the term "orca" in its interpretation. For those who don't know, orcas are also referred to as killer whales. They are the largest member of the dolphin family and one of the world's most powerful predators. With the passing of Bill 80, the breeding and possession of orcas, or killer whales, would be prohibited in the province of Ontario. This prohibition does not apply to orcas possessed on the day prior to the bill's introduction.

One must assume that this clause was included to address the issue of Marineland as they possess the only captive orca, in my information, in Ontario. Nonetheless, if a person chose to acquire an orca after the introduction date but before royal assent, they would be granted six months after the assent to cease to possess this whale. If a person acquired one after royal assent, they would be immediately subject to charges. Further, a person found to possess an orca acquired after the introduction of the bill would be liable, on conviction, to a fine of not more than \$60,000 and imprisonment up to two years.

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Given the size of these whales, I don't think anybody is just going to drop one off on your doorstep. I don't think anybody is going to be acquiring any whales after this bill comes into effect. It wouldn't be like a stray dog or something coming by the house.

Bill 80 will also amend the Animals for Research Act so that the orca prohibitions would apply to registered research and research supply facilities. Our caucus research tells us that there are zero orcas being held in

research facilities in Ontario. However, it is important to include this clause to ensure that this does not become a loophole in the legislation.

I would also like to take this opportunity, when we're talking about research, to say that Lambton College in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton is consistently recognized as one of the top institutions for applied research in Canada. While they are not involved in the study of orca whales or marine biology, they are doing a lot of great work in many other advanced technology fields and in the area of health sciences. To that end, the leadership of Lambton College has been working very hard to qualify for funding through the Ministry of Economic Development and the Small Communities Fund in order to build their new Health Education and Sustainable Care Centre. I certainly hope this government will show that same level of interest in the development and funding of this project as they are showing here today in the prohibition of orca whales.

Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2015, also includes a number of amendments to the existing OSPCA Act that stem from the report by the very esteemed Dr. David Rosen. That report was titled *Developing Standards of Care for Marine Mammals in Captivity and Recommendations Regarding How Best to Ensure the Most Humane Treatment of Captive Cetaceans*.

Dr. Rosen is a marine biologist at the University of British Columbia who chaired the committee looking into the care of marine animals for the government last year. Dr. Rosen concluded that the current general animal welfare standards of care are insufficient to protect marine mammals in captivity. The recommendations that Dr. Rosen and the committee included in this report were:

"(1) We recommend additional regulation(s) to supplement the OSPCA Act that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of marine mammals that are not currently covered by other relevant sections of the act....

"i. Facilities must demonstrate responsibility to the long-term well-being of marine mammals in their care.

"a. Each facility must have an established animal welfare committee.

"b. Each facility must have a written animal management plan that provides justification for all marine mammals housed in the facility.

"c. Each facility is required to help maintain a provincial inventory of marine mammals housed in display facilities.

"d. Each facility must have access to a qualified veterinarian with expertise in marine mammal medicine, who oversees a program of preventive veterinary medicine and clinical care for all marine mammals held in the facility, in accordance with professional standards of practice in Ontario."

They have quite a few recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

"e. Each facility must have a written veterinary care program. This should be developed by a veterinarian in collaboration with other experts (biologists, trainers, cur-

ators, etc.) and should include an annual physical examination of each marine mammal"—on a yearly basis.

"ii. Facilities that hold marine mammals must meet their physical and psychological environmental needs.

"f. Consideration must be given to the three-dimensional environment in which marine mammals live and the need to provide sufficient space for species-appropriate activities both in and out of the water. Therefore, it is recommended that each facility adopt a set of minimum space requirements that are based upon established, internationally recognized codes.

"g. Marine mammals must be protected from exposure to noise that could cause auditory discomfort or distress and lead to injury.

"h. The water supply must be reliable and contribute to the good health and well-being of the marine mammals.

"i. Provisions must be made for appropriate light exposure, including consideration of the type, level, and cycle of exposure.

"j. Each facility must provide suitable social and environmental enrichment programs.

"iii. Facilities must ensure that marine mammals are not harmed in their contact with the general public.

"k. Facilities with public contact programs must ensure the programs are adequately designed and outfitted to minimize potential risks to the health and safety of the marine mammals and humans" that could come in contact with them.

"l. Facilities with a public contact program must have a written policy that clearly identifies and addresses the safety issues and concerns for all participants in the program, including the marine mammals, and specifies the qualifications of those conducting the public contact session."

The second major recommendation in the Rosen report goes on to say:

"(2) We recommend additional regulation(s) through the OSPCA Act for facilities acquiring new wild-born animals. These regulations are designed to protect the welfare of cetaceans destined for public display, either through foreign or domestic acquisitions, with particular emphasis on safeguarding the health of wild populations.

"(3) We recommend the timely adoption of the Guidelines On: The Care and Maintenance of Marine Mammals established by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) as a specific standard of care for marine mammals under the OSPCA Act."

At about 124 pages with citations, this was a very thorough report by Dr. Rosen and the committee. I was just giving you guys the highlights, the overview. The pages were listening intently; I can tell.

If you were listening, you will have noticed that this report stops short of calling for a prohibition on possessing orca whales in Ontario. The committee noted, "This report represents the scientific perspective of the committee and does not include other viewpoints such as those concerned with social, ethical, political, and economic factors." This is a very interesting point, yet the main

thrust of the bill that came from the report is a prohibition on orca whales in Ontario.

Of course, everyone will remember that this report was initially called for following the news stories where Marineland trainers were alleging mistreatment of marine mammals at the facility in Niagara Falls. Personally, I believe that the vast majority of individuals who would choose to work with creatures in zoos and aquariums would do so because they care passionately about these creatures. I believe they are doing what they believe to be in the best interests of those creatures. Nonetheless, these are the recommendations being put forward by this committee.

Out of all the recommendations that the committee made that the government seems to have implemented into Bill 80, I believe the biggest impact may be felt from repealing subsection 11.1(1) of the act, which previously read, "Every person who owns or has custody or care of an animal shall comply with the prescribed standards of care with respect to every animal that the person owns or has custody or care of." That section is amended by Bill 80 to read, "Every person who owns or has custody or care of an animal shall comply with the prescribed standards of care, and the prescribed administrative requirements, with respect to every animal that the person owns or has custody or care of"—the difference in those two statements being that with the passing of Bill 80, persons caring for or in custody of animals that fall under this legislation will be required to follow "prescribed administrative requirements."

To its credit, this government has done what all Liberal governments seem to do, and that is create more bureaucracy. Those individuals caring for these animals will now have the added requirement of completing and submitting records on everything they do. What all of those final requirements will be, we don't know, and it will be some time before we will know. As I said, as always, the devil will be in the details.

Mr. Speaker, what is laid out in Bill 80 suggests that there will be administrative requirements, also known as paperwork, relating to the keeping of animals, the establishment of animal welfare committees, animal care plans, veterinary care programs, record-keeping and disclosure; in other words, as one of my colleagues from Haldimand-Norfolk said, more red tape.

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A technical advisory group will report in six months with suggestions for the final standards and a timeline for their implementation. This group will be comprised of experts from science, industry, advocacy and enforcement. The power to inspect would be amended to make it clear that all of the places, excluding owners' private dwellings, where animals are kept, including off-season locations, may be inspected if the animals are kept for the purpose of exhibition, boarding, hire or sale.

In the case of marine mammals, I am told that they are frequently moved to different parks' holding tanks and inspectors have been unable to view these areas. This is believed to have been a problem for inspectors in the

past. This change is meant to address that. That's my understanding.

OSPCA inspectors would be able to demand the production of records without physically inspecting the site. Hopefully, in reviewing this legislation at the committee stage, this government will seriously consider introducing some basic accountability measures to go along with the increased powers of the OSPCA.

There are many constituents in my riding of Simcoe-Lambton and also across Ontario who question the behaviour, from time to time, of the OSPCA. We've heard many talks about that here in speeches in this Legislature since I first came here in 2007, and there have been many so-called abuses.

Finally, as I mentioned before, the work of Dr. Rosen's committee and the drafting of Bill 80 are the result of many media stories generated over the last few years about care at Marineland in Niagara Falls. In the interest of fairness, I would like to read into the record Marineland's response to the tabling of Bill 80. This response was posted on their website on March 24, 2015:

"Marineland supports the government's commitment to seeking guidance and following the best advice from marine mammal experts regarding appropriate standards of care for marine mammals.

"The technical advisory committee provides essential input from independent marine mammal veterinarians and scientists who have decades of experience rescuing marine mammals, and providing for their ongoing health and care.

"Marineland trusts that the committee members can work co-operatively to provide the government with clear advice and direction towards meaningful standards that will ensure the continuing health of all marine mammals.

"Marineland believes it is essential that the process remain focused on the health and welfare of marine mammals, the decades of scientific research and experience that should inform the setting of standards, and on achieving clear and enforceable standards. We support the government's view that legal standards need to be based on science, not political ideologies or public relations, and the technical advisory committee and the government's own expert panel report should provide the basis on which to proceed.

"Marineland trusts the government will focus on the clear recommendations of its expert panel and its chairman, Dr. Rosen. Marineland supports the recommendation of Dr. Rosen that the recently released comprehensive, independent, and peer-reviewed Canadian Council on Animal Care guidelines be adopted. The guidelines are detailed, comprehensive in scope, and provide clear direction to any facility that houses marine mammals. The guidelines represent over 10 years of work by virtually the entire Canadian scientific community with expertise in the marine mammal field and represent the best practices of marine mammal care.

"Marineland meets or exceeds those standards and is committed to maintaining and enhancing the health and care of all its marine mammals."

As I'm reaching the end of my time, I'd just like to reiterate that I will be supporting Bill 80 at second reading. I believe that the work that Dr. Rosen's committee has done is very thorough and that their suggestions form the basis for sound decision-making in moving forward. I'm encouraged to see that Marineland also supports the work of Dr. Rosen. It is my hope that when this government does get around to filling in the details of the bill and setting the regulations, they will follow the recommendations of Dr. Rosen and not allow politics to influence their final decision-making.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to offer a couple of thoughts on the comments from the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

First, I think he makes a really great point that there are a lot of very critical issues facing us in the province and that perhaps the care and captivity of a single orca whale at Marineland is not the highest priority for this Legislature. Having said that, of course we support the legislation very strongly. Many of us have spoken about our experiences viewing animals in captivity and the discomfort that we feel from using animals for our own entertainment, from confining sentient creatures and using them for fun.

I wanted to share with members something that's happening in my riding of London West, something I'm quite proud of. Storybook Gardens is a historic London landmark, founded in the 1950s. There is an international story, actually, of Slippery the seal, who escaped from Storybook Gardens, where he was held in captivity, and managed to swim over to Sandusky, Ohio, where he was captured and later returned to Storybook Gardens.

Storybook Gardens had four seals, a pair of lynx, beavers, otters and birds of prey, but they realized they could not care for these animals appropriately. They could not provide the appropriate habitat and, as a result, began a process of relocating those animals. Most recently, following last month, a decision was made that they're not even going to be keeping domestic animals in captivity. There's no reason for us to see animals in captivity for our own entertainment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to be able to stand here today and speak to this bill. It was quite concerning when we heard some of the stories from the past about Marineland and what led to all of this, and the great concern expressed by members in this House from all parties to rectify the situation.

I can recall going to Marineland with our children being very, very young. It was a family outing. They loved it, and they began the road to a greater understanding of mammals. Marineland was a perfect place to start.

Animal welfare has become a key priority for our government. We do not take these very unfortunate incidents that have happened in the past very lightly. One of the

things that we did do, of course, is introduce the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act. That's our Bill 80, which is here. Our government is putting in place the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity in Canada.

Our children, and now our grandchildren, developed near water, because we lived on the Ajax waterfront and have for almost 50 years. I've had the good fortune of being the longest-serving chair of the Ajax waterfront, and it has taught me a lot. It has certainly brought me very close to this scenario of marine mammals and other securities that we have to put in place for animals.

My wife and I, having lived there for so long, knew it was something special. It was a great insight, a great learning process. Even now, our children are married, they have children and we're very fortunate that they have each bought cottages on the water in our cottage area, which is well represented by MPP Scott from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I'm very glad that she is very much onside, and we—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: An interesting presentation from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. He talked about cetaceans. I'm trying to get up to date on my grade 13 biology and zoology, but—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tell them the story about the boat. Tell them your South American boat story.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, you know, when you spend time on the seven seas—and I did spend some time in Australia—it's interesting. As with the killer whales, I used to be really frightened of sharks. You see all these movies about sharks back in the 1960s, and there used to be movies about killer whales back in the 1960s. Then, working in Australia, you end up swimming with sharks, whether you want to or not, and you realize that some will bite you and some won't. You find out where they go and you move with them.

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When you're exposed to these animals, it's like live-stock on a farm: You better understand. The case in point would be the killer whale, which was feared by so many people. Pythons, for example, until you live with them—I've lived with them, believe it or not, in a house in Toronto, and boas.

But until you're exposed to them, until you see these kinds of animals in captivity, it changes your perception. In many ways, by having the killer whale in captivity, there is more understanding, less fear, less persecution of the species as children get to see them upfront and personal. We've seen a change in the public's perception of the killer whale. Why is that? Because killer whales, here and there around the world, have been kept in captivity and it has transformed their image. So there are some pluses for having killer whales in captivity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate. I've had my 20 minutes, and there were a few things that I highlighted. I think I want to make sure when I leave this debate today that I'm going to refocus on those highlights.

First is the fact that I don't believe that orcas should be living in captivity. I think they belong in their natural surroundings where their friends and family play together, swim together, hunt together and eat together. I think that's where they're supposed to be. Having one orca completely in solitary on its own, I think, is quite sad.

The other part that I focused on was the fact that we have 50 to 60 zoos and aquariums in Ontario, and yet only 10 of them are under the accreditation of the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums. We talked about roadside zoos and the filth that I personally had seen them in. As well, my seatmate from London West had the exact same experience, and I'm sure it was probably not even at the same roadside zoo.

There is no oversight making sure that when we're keeping animals for our own pleasure that they're being maintained properly. I think that's something that hopefully we'll move forward, whether it's another bill that's brought forward—but I think when we have lions and tigers that don't need a licence, and yet we have to licence our dogs, and possibly in some municipalities we have to licence our cats—like I said, lions and tigers and bears, oh my; no licensing for any of those creatures, depending on where you live in the province of Ontario. I think that's something that we need to be looking at.

Again, like I said, I'm just pleased to have the opportunity to put my two cents into this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Sarnia–Lambton for his reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and reply to the comments from the members from London West, Ajax–Pickering, Haldimand–Norfolk and Hamilton Mountain.

I had a chance to go through and outline some of the issues and concerns in the bill, things we support, things I support, concerns that I have with maybe overregulation in this province and this bill. Maybe we can take some regulations out somewhere else as we bring these regulations in. We were probably overdue for them a long time ago.

Another issue in my riding—which probably would have more concern than this here and these changes—would be the protection of sports fishing because of the Asian carp, which is a big issue in Michigan waters, and Illinois and Ohio. That's a real big concern. I had people contact me over a year ago, concerned that if they ever get into the Great Lakes, fishing would be decimated.

I think that's something that we should take a look at in this Legislature. I know it's been debated. I know the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and others have spoken about this before. I would think that's something we should really take a serious look at. While we're bringing this bill through—okay, let's get it to committee—let's also take a look at what can we do in some small way in

Ontario to protect sports fishing and to prevent the Asian carp, which would decimate the tourist industry and the sports fishing—and all those people who make their livelihood from that industry and the people who enjoy the Great Lakes.

I encourage everyone to come down to Sarnia–Lambton sometime and see the blue water land. I know that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, Mr. Hatfield, knows that area very well. We would love to have you come down and see the bluest water in North America.

Mr. Bill Walker: Next to Georgian Bay.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Next to Georgian Bay, there, on Lake Huron, and of course the St. Clair River that goes all the way to the Windsor–Essex area, right along the side of Essex–Chatham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I gave a bit of a primer a little while ago to what I'd like to talk about in this debate, and that is not just whales in captivity but actually whales in their natural environment.

It was good to hear different members of the assembly talk to that to a degree in regard to their experiences and those of others when it came to looking at various mammals and animals in the wild. I think the point is that there are more ways of being able to see animals than just going to a zoo. Going into the wild, properly supervised, with people who know what they're doing, is not a bad thing.

I just want to start off by saying: Of course we support the bill. How can you not? We understand that you need to have regulation in order to deal with how you deal with the captivity of animals or mammals in a zoo. You know, Mr. Speaker; you've been here as long as I have: How many bills like this have we dealt with? Roadside zoos—I can think of a number of them where either they were private members' bills or government bills that attempted to deal with the issue of how we make sure that those animals that are in captivity in fact are cared for safely and are not put in danger as a result of any of the activities that may be happening in that particular facility.

I don't pretend to know all of the ins and outs of the rules about how you take care of an orca whale. It seems to me it's a pretty big whale in a small tank. I'm sure there are things that you have to be able to do adequately.

I also want to say—and pardon the pun here—don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. That's not the first pun, but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

I, as have many people, have taken my children to Marineland when they were younger, in order to be able to actually see a whale, because that was the only place that I can afford to bring my kids to see a whale here in Ontario. At the same time, we saw a lot of other animals and we got to get on some rides. I strongly recommend people to go to Marineland. It's quite the place to go to, as well as some of the other activities that the Niagara area has to offer. I think it is a great vacation for families to be able to go to, everything from the Niagara Falls to walking up—what do you call that? Clifton Hill, I think

it's called, where all those knock-off shops are and restaurants and all that. It's just great experience. I think Marineland is one of those jewels in a crown of what makes tourism work in the Niagara area. So I don't want this to be seen from our part as being an anti-Marineland tirade, because quite frankly, Marineland does do a lot of good stuff.

I think what the government is trying to do, and I think this is what we have to flesh out in committee, is: Is this the proper way of dealing with the issue? It will be interesting to see what the public has to say as the public comes to committee in order to talk about what they think about this bill. Should it or should it not be in its present form? Is the objective the right objective? Does the objective have to change or is it just strictly a question of the rules changing about how we do this? It will be very interesting to see it when it gets to its life in committee. We'll send it to a special committee of the Legislature big enough to be able to take such a mammoth—I was talking about me—and we will have a chance to hear from the public when it comes to this.

I want to also speak about—I talked about it earlier when I had a chance to speak in response to one of the other members, and that is that a lot of people don't recognize that Ontario has whales that are native to Ontario. I was a little bit not taken aback but not completely unsurprised when I made the point that we actually have beluga whales in Ontario. A number of members, when I went to the back lobby to have a phone call with the Timmins and District Hospital over some stuff that we're dealing with, said, "Jeez, I didn't know that. I wasn't aware that we have whales in Ontario."

Let me tell you the story: "There be whales in Ontario, Captain." We all saw the Star Trek episode, right? I tried to do a good Scotty imitation there; it didn't quite work. My Scotty imitation—God rest Scotty; he's no longer with us—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The captain is still around, though.

Interjections.

1550

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, you guys are doing different kinds of things. You guys are doing different things.

Anyway, in Ontario are the James and Hudson bays. James and Hudson bays, as we all know, are saltwater bodies that are connected to the Atlantic Ocean through the Arctic Ocean, the Bering Sea—not the Bering Sea but the various straits north of Ontario and Quebec.

It is an ocean, and in that ocean we have beluga whales. Beluga whales, as is natural to beluga whales, have to travel to feed. That's what they do. Their whole existence, from the time they're born to the time they die, is how they go around this ocean called James and Hudson bays and actually feed themselves with what is available. Their whole migration is based on where they can get food.

In the summer, the belugas come to this part of the planet called Ontario. They come into James and Hudson bays to feed. Where they feed, by and large—not only,

but by and large—is that they go in pods in front of the large rivers—the Winisk River or the Attawapiskat River or whatever river it might be—and align themselves just down from the rivers into the ocean. So they're still in the ocean—in James Bay or Hudson Bay when they're doing this—and they align themselves in pods. It's something else to see, if you ever have an opportunity. Literally hundreds and hundreds of whales are lined up in pods just waiting for all the stuff that comes down the river to be able to feed—fish and various crustaceans and whatever the river has to offer by way of a menu for those whales on that particular day.

I've had the great fortune of being able to fly over and see some of this a large number of times, both in my own aircraft—Foxtrot Zulu Yankee Victor; if you ever see me flying, that's me—or sometimes, when I have to charter and bring staff and get into particular areas with charters. It's quite something to see. It tells you something about our planet: just how lucky and fortunate we are to live on a planet that has so much biodiversity and so much to offer when it comes to the beauty of what is nature. When you see hundreds of whales feeding at the mouth of a river, it is quite something.

The whales, at times, will come all the way down to the Moosonee/Moose Factory area. Now, they're not there a lot. I want to warn people, if you're going there and expect to see a whale every day, that you may have to wait a little bit to see one, because they, at times, come down. It really depends on what is going on in James and Hudson bays and what the feed is like. But we will see, from time to time, which is really kind of odd, whales that will come down the Moose River.

There are people who have seen belugas out between Moosonee and Moose Factory. Just to draw a picture, on the west bank of the Moose River is Moosonee, and if you move to the east, there's an island right in between, and the island itself is called Moose Factory. It's quite large. Moose Cree is the First Nation that is there, a very large, prosperous First Nation, and also McCrebec, which is the only non-registered reserve in my riding, in the sense that they operate as a traditional First Nation, but they're not recognized under the Indian Act. We can have a discussion, one day, about the pros and cons of that, and also the federal and provincial lands that are there.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Is that where you took Kormos fishing?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's where I took Kormos, yes. I can tell you stories about Kormos on James Bay. Well, maybe I won't tell stories about Kormos on James Bay. There are some things that happen on James Bay that are best left on James Bay.

I would just say that it is quite something to see, from time to time, that whales will come down the Moose River, and you'll either see them in Moosonee or you'll see them on the Moose Factory side in the river doing what whales naturally do, which is eat. You don't see them there a lot, but you do see them from time to time.

The other thing you see is seals. I've got to tell you that the first time I saw one, I had no—I knew there were whales, because I had been told there were whales in James Bay and Hudson Bay, but I had not seen any at the time, as a newly elected member for James Bay. I was in one of these boats that we use; they're freighters that we use to cross over from Moosonee to Moose Factory. They're actually the taxi. The only way you can get there in the summer is to get in one of these freighter boats.

I was in a freighter boat with Jimmy Kapashesit. His son was Randy Kapashesit, who some of you here know was the chief of McCrebec and also the chair of the LHIN, the local health integration network, in our area. His dad had taken me out for a bit of a ride, looking around—actually, we were going fishing is what we were doing—and all of a sudden, I see a seal. There's this huge, humungous seal in the river out in front of our boat, and I'm telling you, that seal was as big as the Clerks' table. It's not a small mammal.

I'm looking over at it, and Jimmy, as Jimmy does, is running the motor in the boat, standing up and looking at all this as we're going by. We go zooming by the seal, and I go, "Jimmy, Jimmy, stop! Stop!"

"What?"

"What is that?" And I meant, "What kind of seal is that?"

And he goes, "What do you mean, 'What is it?' It's a seal."

"I know it's a seal, Jimmy, but you've got to tell me, what kind of seal is it? Is it a harp seal?"

He looks at me. He says, "You know, you guys have got a word for everything. We just call them seals. They're a seal. That's all they are. Leave me alone. You saw it; let's move on."

I thought it was funny. The humour there is that they didn't have particular words for different kinds of seals because for millennia, the Mushkegowuk Cree who lived on the bay had only one kind of seal to look at, so they only had one word for seals: the type of seals that they lived with. So that was that.

The interesting thing is, what Jimmy was telling me was that the seals—and you get to see this in the spring—will come down the river and beach themselves on sandbars in order to get sun. They do what seals do—sit there, digest and whatever—and they're something to see. They're—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Whatever. You guys are bad.

Anyway, they're quite something to see. They're a very large mammal. I don't know how much they weigh, but they probably weigh in the neighbourhood of 500, 600, 800 pounds. They're quite big. They're something to see. They're nature in its thing.

My point is, there is all kinds of beauty to be seen in places like the James Bay. If we, as a province, wanted to really be bold and outside of the box, to say, "How do we allow people in Ontario and across the world to see these natural beauties that we have in our nature?" We would be figuring out ways of being able to properly support

entrepreneurs on the James Bay and some of the institutions to build the infrastructure to allow tourists to be able to travel more easily to the James Bay.

I'm going to give some credit where credit is due. The province has done some stuff over the years. Right now, we're investing some money in the Ontario Northland train, the only train running and Ontario-owned. Ontario Northland actually starts in John's riding, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, and ends up in my riding in Moosonee. There's some money being invested there, and that's a good thing.

We did a very interesting federal-provincial program on a private sector venture with the McCrebec when we built the Eco Lodge. Some of you members have been there. You've had the opportunity. If you want to go somewhere where there's a really nice facility and be able to experience the ecosystem on James Bay, contact the Eco Lodge: 658-6400. Again, the number is on the screen: 658-6400. You get to book not only a room, but they'll also assist you with booking excursions out onto the bay and into the river to take a look at some of these natural wonders that we see.

They can arrange for you to go out and see the northern lights. They can arrange for you to go out and look at the bay when the whales are down; hopefully you'll be able to get to see the whales. But they're another way that we can help people to see nature not in a tank, in captivity—and I'm going to get to this point that my colleague the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane had—but in the wild, where they're really in their own habitat, and we get to see them and what they do in their natural habitat. It's another way of being able to promote tourism, but at the same time help do some economic development in areas in which we have not naturally done that.

I want to make a point, and it was done as a bit of a jest during one of the members' speeches, but I thought it was a very interesting point. One of the members—and I don't remember the riding. Do you know the riding? Sorry, I don't know your riding.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Over there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Over there; the member over there. I would never be the Speaker of the House because I don't know people's ridings. It's Kitchener something-or-other.

Interjection: Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Kitchener—Conestoga. She made a point, and she was quite correct—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Kitchener Centre? Okay; sorry about that. I should have known. That's my old friend John's riding. Okay, gotcha.

Anyway, the member made the point, which I thought was very good, that whales are being held in a confined area that is not so big, and it's pretty demoralizing for them psychologically, probably, to be in a caged-up area alone, with no other whales, having to live in that confined area. Somebody made a comment—the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane—and I thought it was

actually a very valid comment, which is: That's how we house our prisoners. When you think about it, if it doesn't work for whales, why do we think the confinement system we have today works any better for prisoners when it comes to rehabilitation? I thought that was actually an interesting link.

1600

I'm not arguing for a second that we shouldn't have prisons. Obviously, we have to have prisons. You have to take people out of circulation who have broken the law and are a danger to society. I'm not advocating that for a second. I'm not saying we should make a Taj Mahal to house prisoners, but the point is, if you're trying to rehabilitate somebody in the penal system, you have to have a system in place that is actually successful in rehabilitation.

By overcrowding prisoners, as we're seeing, especially in our federal system—the federal government has changed laws on the criminal side akin to what we saw in United States, where we're warehousing prisoners in institutions that were never designed to take that capacity. What you're going to end up with is a powder keg. It's kind of like Marineland, to an extent; that was the point the member from Kitchener Centre was making. But in the case of prisons, what the federal government has done by changing the laws and making it that more people are being incarcerated for lesser and lesser crimes—we're filling up our jails to overcapacity. That is not only not ethical; it doesn't work.

How do you do rehabilitation in that kind of system? It seems to me that you have to have laws that are straight and tough, and everybody understands what the rules are. But we have a responsibility, as federal and provincial governments, if we're going to have jails, to at least get it right and do something with the time that the prisoners are there so they're rehabilitated.

Provincially, we're two years less a day, so we have a little bit less effect than the feds have. They do longer sentences because they can put somebody away for 20 or 30 years. It seems to me that we have to have a real rehabilitation system that provides people with adequate shelter, considering it's a jail; some way so that people are able to do something useful with their time while they're there; and doing some rehabilitation so that, hopefully, when the person has served out their sentence, they actually have a chance to come back into society.

I want to digress a bit. One of the places I saw that was very interesting was with your former Solicitor General—Rob Simpson?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sampson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sampson. He and I went to Edmonton, where there's now an election. It looks like we're going to elect a whole bunch of New Democrats, but that's a whole other story.

We went to visit—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You're so funny.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is embarrassing. The Tories are in third place in Alberta; go figure that one out.

Anyway, my point is, we visited a jail, a federal institution, in Hobbema. It's owned by the federal government, but it's run more or less under the auspices of the elders and the First Nations people of that community. What they've done is, they've taken incarceration for aboriginal people in a different way. They're trying to get them to heal themselves as people with their spirituality and then work with them in order to rehabilitate them back into the community. Their success rate, as far as rehabilitating and putting people back into society without the recidivism that we see today, is pretty amazing.

But back to whales, Mr. Speaker. I saw you; you were getting quick on the draw. You were really good in allowing me to stray a little bit off the line and talk about Hobbema and how the—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Alberta; go figure out Alberta.

Do they have whales in Alberta? Can I talk about that? There's a whale in Alberta and it's called Jim Prentice. He's the whale in the room, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think I have an obligation to remind the member that we are in fact debating Bill 80, and ask him to bring his remarks back to the bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I appreciate that you're reeling me back in, Speaker. That was a Tory line. It was a very good one; I had to take it. I am not beyond taking someone else's line, but I do give you credit.

So I just come back to the intent of the bill. I hear in this debate that we probably have a fair degree of support in this Legislature. I think the question's going to become—the devil is in the details. Once we get this bill into committee it'll be interesting to hear what people have to say about it. Is the bill, in its current form, the way that it should be when it gets back to the House at third reading? In other words, should there be amendments made to it? It will be interesting to see that.

I want to say again upfront to my friends in the Niagara area, I love Marineland. I think it's a great place to bring your kids, and of course, anything we can do to help them do a better job of running Marineland and finding ways of making it more attractive, I think is great. It's one of those parts of the tourism system in Niagara that I think is just so key.

Again, I want to do a last plug for Eco Lodge in Moose Factory: 658-6400. The number is flashing on your screen as we're speaking.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Is that 705?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, 705, obviously. It's a great opportunity, for the Eco Lodge, to allow people to be able to contact them so that you're able to set up a tour to be able to see some of the animals and mammals that we talk about here today in real life, in the real environment, in a way that we should be seeing them, which is out in the wild.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you. But, again: 658-6400, Eco Lodge, Moose Factory, Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's 705.

Questions or comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not sure what part of the member from Timmins–James Bay's remarks I should be commenting on, but let me give him credit: He does a fantastic job of promoting his community.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: 658-6400.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I get it. I get it.

So, yes, he deviated, but, to be fair, I think it's interesting to learn about things that are in parts of Ontario that we sometimes don't even know exist. So for him to bring that to the House, regardless of the bill—thank you for doing that. It's certainly appreciated.

But let me get back to commenting on something that he touched on very little, and that's the bill. What is frustrating for me in this House—and this is not the first time this has happened—is that we have pretty well unanimous consent on what we're trying to do. I think the proponents, or the people who are experts on these issues, are on our side, because they too want to protect, in this case, a mammal.

In the 12 years that I had the opportunity to serve on municipal government, when council decided on something—we jot down a motion, we move it and second it, we vote, and the job is done. So that's the frustration in this place. We really agree. We want to get this done. There are an awful lot of things that I think Ontarians want us to talk about that are just as important as this, but we do have 99.9% agreement, so I would say: Let's get this done. Let's stop regurgitating over and over and over again. Let's make life better for mammals—especially whales like this one—that I think we need to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand. I'm going to try to help you with your job, because the member did kind of wander off there and elaborate.

He was talking about something out in Alberta. To be honest, I don't pay much attention to Alberta, but I just want to make sure that we know for the record who is in third place in Ontario politics: that is the NDP in Ontario. I'm not certain about Alberta, but I think Mr. Prentice is doing a whale of a job, and he'll probably come out the other end okay.

Mr. Speaker, back to the bill—and I want to talk about the Eco Lodge here a little bit. He's got me intrigued. I didn't catch the number that he was advertising there.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: 658-6400.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll give him that one other time: 658-6400; 705 area code, of course. Maybe I can go up in one of those junkies and see his area of the world. You see, I did not know there were beluga whales at our back door. That's kind of interesting to know.

But getting back to the bill: My colleague from Sarnia–Lambton actually brought up in his remarks that the devil is in the details. At first blush, thinking and talking about the prohibition of the only orca that is in captivity in Ontario is something that the bill talks about, and most people can say, "Well, that makes sense. We need to talk

about that." But it's the regulation and the other piece of this bill, Mr. Speaker, that talks about animal welfare and care. That's what my concern is. This government often brings things in through regulation which we don't have an opportunity to debate and we don't have an opportunity to have input on and ensure that it's a bill that truly is going to serve all Ontarians. It really is at their mercy to do that.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has talked about getting this bill passed. I think, again, my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton brought up a good point: Is this really the best use of time in this House?

Of all the people in my riding—I have not, in my three and half years, had one person call me about an orca in captivity. They do call me about hydro rates that are the highest on the continent, Mr. Speaker. They do call me about the Green Energy Act. They do call me about things like the loss of nurses in hospitals and schools in rural Ontario being closed. They do call me about ODSP and OW issues and the SAMS boondoggle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

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Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House. I was going to comment on Bill 80, on the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but I think instead I'm going to focus my comments on the speech made by the member for Timmins–James Bay and perhaps continue the travelogue of northern Ontario.

Before you get to the eco centre—the best way to get there is on the Polar Bear Express, which is being refurbished. It would have been much better if you could take the train from Toronto to Cochrane, but unfortunately this government decided they had other things to do for northern Ontario, so they cut that. But while you're in Cochrane—and Cochrane had the polar bear habitat. I think it's better if you see polar bears in the wild, but not all of us will have that opportunity. In the polar bear habitat, they now have two bears, and they are studying the relationship with bears to try and see how to make a better wild habitat for bears. I think if you have the chance to come to northern Ontario, you should take that chance and, before you go to the Eco Lodge, go to the polar bear habitat. They're very friendly people in Cochrane—very friendly people throughout the north.

The member also spoke a few times about Marineland. I, too, took my kids when they were small. We all went to Marineland, because when I was young and my kids were younger, we couldn't afford to go whale-watching on the east coast or the west coast, or even in Mr. Bisson's riding.

We have to make sure that all animals are treated as well as possible, but we have to remember that, for a lot of people, seeing those animals creates a much bigger appreciation for them, because the majority of people are never going to be able to afford to see them in the wild. It's a privileged few—many of us are among that privileged

aged few—who have that ability. We should always remember that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment? The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I remember, growing up, my sister and I wanted to have a pet dog or a pet cat. My mom never allowed that, but she did eventually give in and allow us to have a pet fish. When we had the fish, we learned a lot about compassion and respect for others.

You know, in my riding of Etobicoke Centre we don't have any marine mammals, but I think all members of this Legislature, on both sides, would like to have compassion and respect, and I think this is about compassion and respect. This is about putting in place guidelines, rules, that help protect animals and treat them with greater respect.

When I think about some of the elements of this that are important, there is prohibiting the possession and breeding of orcas in Ontario, and introducing stronger penalties. I think having that deterrent in place is really, really important, and making sure that we can put in place the administrative requirements requiring animal care plans and record-keeping of entities that possess marine mammals.

When I think about this, this adds on to our animal protection legislation, the rules that we currently have in place to protect animals in this province. I think this is just a continuation of the government's work on that. We know that this has been built off of recommendations by experts, by people who know a lot about this field, who know what the best practices and the best standards of care are. When I think about making sure we manage the size of enclosures, making sure we're thinking about water quality, noise and lighting, social groupings, and the handling and display of marine mammals, again, I just come back to the issue of respect and compassion.

When I was young, growing up, we were taught to have respect and compassion for other people and respect and compassion for animals. These animals are in our care collectively, and we need to make sure we treat them with respect and compassion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. We return to the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I now have lots of latitude, because everybody spoke on something, Mr. Speaker.

I want to tell a story, and I'm going to start there, because it has to do with polar bears. My good friend the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about how he has a polar bear in his riding in captivity in Cochrane and that people come and see it.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Two of them; excuse me. It allows me to talk about polar bears in the wild, and I've got to tell you this story.

A good friend of mine who some of you may know, the former chief of Attawapiskat, Mike Carpenter, was out on the land in the spring getting ready for the spring hunt to get the goose and to get the moose and do what

he has to do in order to feed his family, because there is still a very traditional lifestyle on the James Bay, where people still use hunting as a way of sustenance.

Anyway, he's out there with a buddy, getting the camp set up. You've got to imagine: You're out on your snow machines, you're out north of the Attawapiskat River, you're in the middle of basically nowhere, and you're setting up a hunt camp for him and his family to come do their spring hunt in a week or so. They're getting everything ready, so he's got a couple of tents set up, they're gathering wood and getting everything to get ready.

All of a sudden, they decide that they would like some tea, so they make some tea inside their tent. They're sitting in the tent, getting to the point where they're thinking about leaving, and lo and behold, a polar bear sticks its head in the tent flap.

If any of you have ever been live in front of a polar bear, it's enough to make you see Jesus in about two seconds. They are huge. A polar bear is a huge animal, and this thing stooped down, stuck its head into the tent and started sniffing around to see if there was anything to eat. The only thing there was two humans, and guess what? As some of you know, polar bears will eat humans. The guns that they had weren't in the tent; they were on the snow machines.

I said to Mike, "What the heck did you do, Mike?"—I had more colourful language. He says, "Well, I did what I could do. There was a log in the fire. I grabbed one end of it with one hand. The thing was on fire—you should've seen the burn on my hand—and I started whacking the thing on the forehead," until finally the bear retreated out of the tent. Mike Carpenter is still here today to talk about that hunting experience because of his calmness and wisdom in being able to get rid of the polar bear without having to shoot it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure, of course, to stand in the House and talk to a piece of legislation we're bringing forward, but I will be sharing my time today with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Davenport and the member from York South–Weston.

What makes it particularly delightful for me to speak to this particular bill is how socially progressive it shows our government is on a whole raft of issues, not just looking after poor people; we're actually now looking at marine mammals in a way that's compassionate, which is important. It says something about who we are.

Speaking to Bill 80, the marine mammals act, we are doing something which actually recognizes that we weren't taking care in the past and we're prepared now to correct that for the future. This bill is essentially about balance: balance in how we care for mammals in our care, in our zoos, in our aquariums.

We do some large mammals very, very well. I remember, for instance, in the Toronto zoo—I used to attend there on a regular basis with my children. My daughter Robin is five years old, who happened to be born on May

5, so she's a fifth child of the fifth month. On her fifth birthday, we were up at the Toronto zoo and had a chance to go behind the scenes, and we were petting the tongue of an elephant. It was an extraordinary experience for both of us to be that up close and personal with an elephant. The tongue is very rough, with big bumps on it, which allows it to take grass off the ground. My five-year-old was up there with her hand inside an elephant's mouth.

Sadly, today that elephant is no longer at the Toronto zoo, because they also recognized how difficult it was for us in a zoo facility to care for an animal of that size, given our climate and our conditions. You probably read about Bob Barker of *The Price Is Right* coming out and helping the city of Toronto to move that animal to a sanctuary where it could be better looked after, considering the conditions it was facing up here.

Speaker, we also seem to be very much doing well with aquariums. At the zoo, of course, there are sea lions, seals and otters. You see them there playing, and the kids are thrilled to be there. We also do aquariums well. I had the pleasure of taking my stepkids to the Ripley's museum shortly after it opened. Being on those automatic pathways as you see sharks, barracudas and all sorts of marine life in that aquarium setting, where they're not in an environment where by any stretch of the imagination we would say they were being ill-treated—they were happy within their environment. They're protected, they're well fed and it's such an incredible learning experience for our children.

It was the same thing, when I was growing up, with the Riverdale Zoo, where I got for the first time, as a downtown-Toronto person, a chance to see cows, horses and donkeys—as a young child, at the Riverdale Zoo. They were contained in fairly tight quarters. At the time there were also lions and others, but in time we recognized that those facilities were too small to properly manage. The African wildlife was moved out to the Toronto zoo, and it just became a farm. That was an important experience to me, in helping me better understand the mammals in the world that we share.

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I had the pleasure of being in Japan with a very good friend of mine years ago. We went up to the north in Japan, on one of the high-speed bullet railroads, to an onsen. An onsen, as you know, is like a hot spring. Think about what we get out in Alberta, in the mountains, and the sulphur hot springs. Except there, they've got 700 or 800 years of tradition behind their onsens, where it's very competitive for people to come visit. In one particular onsen we visited, they had black bears contained in the smallest cages. It was so disheartening to see what they were doing in an attempt to draw people into that facility. In these close confines, they kept these bears. It was a delightful visit, but it was very disappointing to see the bears in that condition.

I realize that what we have here is a bill about balance.

I think we've recognized now that the orca is not an animal that it makes sense to contain, particularly on an

individual basis, inside a tank. The orca is an extraordinarily social character. I've heard stories of orca mothers so fretful over the loss of their pup that has been picked up and trapped that they've beached themselves in agony. It's terrible when we think about that. An orca tends to live in much larger pods. We've heard so many people here speak about that.

I was delighted: I was here earlier in the debate when the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex talked at great length about the history, the biology, what the orcas eat, and it was an extraordinarily well-detailed speech. I learned a lot more about orcas than I otherwise would have ever known.

We've also heard talk about Marineland. Marineland is a great, world-class organization. They do a lot of stuff really, really well. There are opportunities for people to go and visit that fantastic facility, to see all the other animals that are there: sea lions, dolphins, walruses, beluga whales. We know that they're doing everything they have been doing within the laws that applied at the time. But now times are changing, and they're looking to do things differently, and we accept the fact, because Kiska, we've heard, isn't doing well as an individual orca in captivity. Her dorsal fin bent over like that was a sign of depression.

So I'm very pleased that our government is moving forward to make Kiska the last orca in captivity in Ontario, that we won't be out bringing more into Ontario, but we will allow and continue to encourage this great organization to flourish, for tourists to come to Ontario to enjoy all that Ontario has to offer.

With that, I'll leave it to my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I've been asked to speak to this bill. I didn't know much about the bill before today, or about orcas, as a matter of fact. It's one of those afternoons when it actually is nice to sit in the House and to learn something new.

Listening to the discussion, I have reason to believe that Bill 80 is something that there seems to be a consensus with respect to.

The thought occurs to me that the World Court, in many cases, holds that solitary confinement is cruel and unusual punishment. I know that how we relate to animals is a determinant, to a large extent, of how we relate to people. It's important that we hold these things to be self-evident and true and do what we can to protect all of Mother Nature's species.

Orcas like to hunt in pods, I'm told. They can't stand noise. They like to talk to each other. In fact, scientists tell us that they have their own language and, depending on the pod, even their own dialect. We don't know yet—we probably will in a few years—what they're saying. We just have to learn how to translate it into English, Mr. Speaker. But once we do that, I'm sure it'll be a fascinating conversation.

I want to just broaden it out a bit, though, because we can tend to romanticize these things—and it's important that we do that. *Free Willy* was a great film. All the kids and their parents who sat down with them loved the film. *Willy* was going to get away.

I've been reading an awful lot about climate change, lately, and particularly the impact on our oceans. We talk about Kiska and the water quality and being alone and all of that, in that place. But scientists are now telling us that we've so degraded the water, particularly in oceans, that they were estimating it could take 100 years to recover. Now they're saying it could take 800 to 1,000 years. That's just if we leave it alone: if we quit overfishing it, if we quit doing all the things we ought to intuit are not appropriate to do.

When we have the broader debate about climate change, as I'm sure we will, we need to think not only globally and act locally, as with the orca we've been talking about today, but recognize that thinking globally and acting locally is probably no longer a phrase we should be repeating, because everything we do in life vis-à-vis nature is of global importance, and we need to acknowledge that. I think that in many ways our initiative with respect to climate change is a very specific global response to the kind of issue we're talking about here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals for Research Act.

Animal welfare is a key priority of our government, and the introduction of Bill 80 clearly underlines this point. Before I go forward, I'd like to outline some of the steps we have taken to support and protect animals in our province.

In 2009, this government implemented stronger animal protection legislation and stiffer penalties, including jail, fines and a potential lifetime ownership ban, for those who abuse animals. We put additional oversight and rules in place for roadside zoos. We required veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, and introduced measures to protect them from liability for doing so.

We enabled the OSPCA to inspect places where animals are kept for entertainment, exhibition, boarding, sale or hire, and we introduced additional penalties for harming law enforcement service animals such as dogs and horses.

In October 2012, the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, now the Attorney General, set out a framework to further strengthen animal welfare enforcement with a three-point plan to improve province-wide enforcement of animal protection measures in the OSPCA Act and strengthened governance of the OSPCA, consider options for tougher inspections and registration of zoos and aquariums, and create new regulations to further protect marine animals in captivity. We also im-

proved the OSPCA's ability and capacity to carry on their good and important work.

This legislation, Bill 80, continues that good work and is the next logical step in this process to protect wildlife in our province. If passed, simply put, Bill 80 would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario. The bill will establish the best standards of care for marine mammals in captivity. Additionally, the bill would create a framework to establish animal welfare committees, as recommended by Dr. Rosen's report.

I'd like to take a bit of time to discuss the report prepared by Dr. David Rosen, a respected marine biologist, on the care and maintenance of marine mammals in captivity. In his report, Dr. Rosen outlined what elements those standards should govern, in terms of light, sound, water quality and enclosure size.

Facilities with marine mammals in Ontario would need to adhere to the new standards. These include that facilities that hold marine mammals must meet their physical and psychological environmental needs. Consideration would be given to the environment in which marine mammals live. The water supply must be reliable and contribute to the good health and well-being of the marine mammals and, most importantly, facilities must ensure that marine mammals are not harmed in their contact with the general public.

These new standards, which will be brought forward this summer, will ensure both greater protection and improved treatment for marine mammals.

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With the framework in place, animal welfare committees would ensure planning, protection and oversight for the animals' care. For example, this includes animal care plans, access to veterinarians with expertise in marine mammals, and enhanced record-keeping.

This legislation, Bill 80, would put in place the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity in Canada.

This bill puts important protections in place for orcas, marine mammals sometimes referred to as killer whales. The ministry has looked closely at the issue and determined that new standards of care are required for orcas.

Orcas are the largest of the marine mammals in captivity, not just in Ontario but around the world. There are very large, mobile and social mammals. These unique features led our government to determine that their well-being in captivity would be especially difficult to ensure, and so we would end this practice in Ontario. Our government feels strongly that it is difficult to develop a suitable habitat for an animal of that magnitude.

If this bill is passed, any facility that possesses an orca after the introduction of the bill would be responsible for the removal of that animal within six months after royal assent. This is about making sure all marine mammals in captivity have the best standards of care and protections possible. These enhanced standards will help give the public confidence that these magnificent creatures are being properly cared for and protected.

Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to speak on this important bill and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for York South—Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise today in the House in support of Bill 80. I have been following the debate this afternoon and I think it's been quite interesting. I heard the member from Parry Sound, for example, speak about the history of this bill and how we came to the point of introducing Bill 80. The MPP from Timmins—James Bay spoke about where in Ontario we can go and see beluga whales. The MPP from Chatham—Kent gave us an “orcas 101” course, I guess, and the MPP from Halton said this is about doing the right thing.

It's about treating these animals in captivity as well as possible. I think in principle we're all in agreement. Perhaps the devil is in the details but that can be discussed in committee, I am sure.

Interjection.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: We can discuss that in committee; yes, we can.

Mr. Speaker, when I was raising my family, I was always resistant to take my kids to see animals in captivity, whether it was at the Toronto zoo, whether it was at Marineland; however, under great insistency, I did certainly take them at least once to both the Toronto zoo and to Marineland.

Kids have a natural attraction to pets and animals. I remember on one Halloween my son came home with two goldfish. I said, “Where did you that goldfish? How could it be that you knocked on a door and somebody gave you goldfish?” He said, “No, Ma, we went to the pet store at the corner and this is what I got for trick-or-treat.” We were now the owners of two goldfish and we had to provide for a good-sized aquarium. It was difficult to take care of two goldfish. Imagine how difficult it can be for orcas kept in captivity.

I can just imagine the difficulty that larger marine animals, and mammals in this case, can pose. As we know and we've heard this afternoon, orcas are extraordinarily complex and exceptionally large animals. I think that enacting a ban on the breeding and acquisition of orcas in Ontario is the right thing to do. Our government feels strongly that it is difficult to develop a suitable habitat for an animal of that size, and I think that all the members here are in agreement. That's why we have moved forward with this decision to prohibit the future acquisition and breeding of orcas in Ontario. They are magnificent creatures, as we have heard.

I want to point out that this bill, in addition, would create a framework to establish animal welfare committees, as recommended by the report. These committees would ensure that the planning, protection and oversight for the animals' care would take place.

Our government is trying to implement and put in place the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity here in Ontario and the strongest standards in all of Canada, and I agree with that.

It has been a pleasure to speak to this bill. I hope that we will see it going forward as soon as possible. We'll see it get to committee and then come back for third reading to have speedy approval.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to speak for a couple of minutes on Bill 80. I guess this has been a terrible problem in our province, so we had better get rid of Kiska, out of Marineland, as soon as possible. Once again, we pound away at another business here in the province of Ontario.

You know, here we are talking about this bill today with the number of problems we actually have in this province—first of all, a \$300-billion debt; a lot of young people, about 20% not working—and we're spending our time on Bill 80.

I was at a home show on the weekend. It was basically a home and cottage show. Not one person mentioned Bill 80 to me or the fact that there shouldn't be orcas at Marineland or any location in Ontario. What they did tell me about, though—I ran into a few people who were from the farming community, agricultural stakeholders—is that they're very concerned about the coyotes. We've had a number of cases of coyote kills. There's a growing population. In fact, the large coyotes are moving down from the north, about 120-pound coyotes. What they're basically doing today to sheep and small cattle is they're actually eating them alive. They take the back end off of the cow and they leave the cow still breathing with no rear end on it. We've asked over and over again at MNR, at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and you might as well talk to someone on Mars, because no one listens.

The reality is, this is what this government is doing. They're wasting our time here and neglecting the people of Ontario and the real issues: hydro, jobs, the economy, debt, all these sorts of things. Let's start getting together and start making this Parliament actually work. This bill is a joke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand in my place this afternoon and bring the voice of Windsor—Tecumseh to this hallowed chamber.

I guess I've been around whales one way or another most of my life. I was an army brat. I started school at Fort Churchill in Manitoba on the shores of Hudson Bay. In those days, the whaling industry was still very active. You could go down to the bay and you could see the beluga whales that had been harvested. They were used for food, fuel and art and any other number of purposes.

I told the House before about going cod jigging in Newfoundland just off the south coast, off of Burin, with a buddy of mine who lives down there and my father-in-law visiting. On a really foggy day, you're out there trying to catch a cod and all of a sudden there's the majesty of a whale breaching along the boat: small boat, big whale. It's a lot of fun. Your heart sort of goes pitter-

patter, pitter-patter. But you cannot believe the sense of wonder that one gets when you're that close to a whale in the wild, and that is something special.

I've also visited British Columbia, been out in a small fishing boat and seen the orcas jump that day. I also saw an eagle come down and try to take home a harbour seal. It had the seal in its claws about two feet out of the water before it was just too heavy and the eagle had to let it go. I said to my buddy, "Imagine going home tonight and the wife says, 'How was your day, dear?'" and the seal says, "I don't know, but I've got a splitting headache. I can't understand it."

It's just one of those things. When you see an eagle pick up a seal in the wild, or you see a whale breach in the wild, it's something special.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I am really pleased to speak on this bill today, Bill 80, on preventing the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario.

One of the aspects of this bill that hasn't been widely discussed is one of the main reasons for having these mammals in captivity—and the educational purposes that they serve there. Marineland, I think, has been doing an absolutely fabulous job of educating youth for quite some time about marine mammals. But one thing that I want to talk about today is, if this is one of the primary justifications, and the goal is to study marine mammal behaviour—whether it's breeding patterns or whether it's their social skills—how normal are those skills, those little pieces of evidence, going to be if the mammals are kept in aquariums? It's just not going to be their natural habitat, and they will not be behaving in a normal fashion.

I would personally like to see that we use modern technology to bring the educational aspects of our marine mammals to our youth, and perhaps Marineland can think about doing something like that in the future, and still be a centre for education on marine life.

I'm very, very pleased and proud that we are following through on our commitment to enhance animal welfare for all animals, especially marine animals. I think that this is an important bill, and I'm extremely pleased to support it.

Thank you for the opportunity to join with my colleagues and support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Again, I'm happy to provide some additional comments on Bill 80.

This afternoon's debate has been interesting. It has been lots of storytelling. But with the greatest of respect to all of us in this chamber, I don't think any of us are experts in animal husbandry, or certainly not orcas.

I really have concerns that we are debating a piece of legislation that deals with one whale in one facility. I've never been to Marineland. I haven't taken my kids to Marineland. We were fortunate enough to go to Newfoundland and saw lots of whales. I am by no means an

expert. But I do have concerns that we are enacting a piece of legislation that—by the very little research I do know, says whales don't want to be by themselves. They live in pods, they travel in pods, they hunt in pods, and yet this legislation is saying, "No. You must have only one. The name is Kiska. And it must not go beyond that."

I just don't think that we have the knowledge, the skills here in this Legislature to say that the OSPCA has an expert within their organization who can understand and appreciate and direct marine animals. We have one marine animal in the province of Ontario. How could we possibly have enough experts in the province of Ontario to give us the instruction and the direction that we need?

So do I have the issues with Bill 80? Yes, I do, most of it related to: Why are we doing this when we do not have the knowledge level to talk and direct one business for a business model? I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe it's the member for Beaches–East York who's going to respond on behalf of the government members.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm glad to speak on behalf of my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member for Davenport, the member from York South–Weston and the member from Kingston and the Islands for their comments on the bill, and to respond to some of the comments of our friends on the other side: Simcoe North, Windsor–Tecumseh and Dufferin–Caledon.

The great thing that I think I heard, particularly from the member from Simcoe North, is there will be no objections to curtailing debate on this thing as fast as we can, so that we can move on to other pieces of important legislation. But let's not forget how important a piece of legislation this is. Notwithstanding the comments of the member from Dufferin–Caledon, this is not about one whale; this is about a whole bunch of regulations around not just that animal for the rest of its natural life, but all the other animals in the care of marine facilities in Ontario that are currently existing or will in the future exist. This is not about protecting this one whale by itself; it is about not allowing another whale to be brought out of the wild and into captivity in circumstances which are just not conducive to its psychological well-being.

That was a point that was underscored by David Rosen, that not just the physical but the psychological aspects of a sentient being, a sentient cetacean like Kiska, are absolutely essential so that, if we go back to the member from Kingston and the Islands and talk about the educational aspect, we are actually teaching our children the importance of empathy, the importance of not doing this to animals: keeping them, particularly sentient beings, in a condition which is abhorrent to their natural way of being.

When you think about an orca, which can swim easily 100 miles—that's from Toronto to my neighbour in Quinte West's house—each day: These animals are used to going a long distance. They're used to travelling in pods. It's very important that we get this bill forward as soon as possible. Thank you for all your comments on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I will speak to Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2015. The purpose of the act, as stated in the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act: “The object of the society”—meaning the OSPCA—“is to facilitate and provide for the prevention of cruelty to animals and their protection and relief therefrom.”

The OSPCA is a charitable organization that provides sheltering services for animals and has enforcement powers under the OSPCA Act. These powers include entering onto private property without a warrant, demanding the production of records and things, issuing orders, seizing animals, charging owners for the boarding, treatment and care of seized animals, destroying animals, and laying charges for provincial offences or under the Criminal Code of Canada.

The OSPCA and its affiliates have acquired these powers without being subject to any associated accountability or oversight. Given human nature, the combination of the lack of oversight and accountability of the OSPCA and the inherent conflict of interest of a private organization running both a private charity and a de facto private police force, it is not surprising that serious abuses of power and authority have developed at the OSPCA. The necessity to raise money to pay for enforcers’ salaries has resulted in orders being written and animals being seized for the purpose of fundraising.

So serious, in fact, are the reported abuses that Carl Noble, a former OSPCA director and member of the inspection/enforcement committee and a former mayor of South Bruce Peninsula, was one of the 29 directors who resigned en masse in 2006 in protest over the change in attitude of the OSPCA toward very aggressive enforcement. Carl and his 28 colleagues wrote letters to the Minister of Correctional Services expressing their strong concern over the aggressive actions of OSPCA inspectors and calling for government to create oversight and accountability of OSPCA enforcement.

Here is what he had to say in July 2008: “The reason I resigned from the OSPCA board was because of deficit budgeting and the fact that they took a 180-degree turn in training and appointment of investigators. The newly appointed chief investigator was of the opinion that if you were charged by the OSPCA, you were guilty until proven innocent, and this went directly against my grain.... What really upset me was the fact that they suggested bullet-proof vests, nightsticks and handcuffs.” Carl said, “I was of the opinion they should be taught some people skills.”

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Carl felt so strongly about this issue that he made a deputation on Bill 50 to the standing committee. From Hansard, I quote, “We need accountability for and to the people of Ontario.”

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I don’t hear anything about Bill 80 coming from the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would have to say to the members again that while the debate this afternoon has been interesting, we are debating Bill 80. But I do find that, broadly speaking, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills is discussing issues that are relevant with respect to Bill 80.

I return to the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is about Bill 80. Some of this is history, but it’s important history, as all of it pertains to the OSPCA Act and what I view to be flaws in the act that we should correct, and that correction should come from this House. I would say that to the member across the way, who has concerns and is in a position to make those changes.

The LeSage report: Following the decision of the OSPCA to kill 350 dogs in its Newmarket shelter rather than treat the curable condition of ringworm, and its subsequent reversal of that decision after the OSPCA came under widespread public criticism, the provincial government asked Justice Patrick LeSage and Dr. Alan Meek to conduct an independent review of the OSPCA.

The following recommendation was included in the LeSage report: “The OSPCA Act gives the OSPCA powers akin to those of a police force, but does not identify an agency responsible for overseeing the OSPCA in the execution of the legislative mandate.... The Ontario government should consider legislative amendments to provide for oversight of the OSPCA in order to remedy the current situation of having the OSPCA essentially policing itself.”

Yet to date, nothing has been done.

In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan provincial government withdrew all funding from the Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the fall of 2014, which resulted in the Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals being disbanded. The reason that the Saskatchewan provincial government withdrew funding was the very aggressive abuse of enforcement powers to write unfounded orders, and the wrongful seizure of horses from a farmer.

The farmer has charged the Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals with theft. The hurtful practice of abuse of power and authority by the Saskatchewan body had been going on for some time. Finally, an animal owner has stood up to them. Finally, they have been held to account. Finally, right has been done.

In Grey-Bruce, after numerous complaints of overreach and abuse on the part of the local OSPCA branch, particularly by an overly aggressive enforcement officer named Jennifer Bluhm, the local OSPCA office in Hanover, which served the counties of Grey-Bruce, was closed in 2013 and has not been reopened.

Other animal welfare organizations disapprove of the actions of the OSPCA. The Lanark Animal Welfare Soci-

ety was an affiliate of the OSPCA. They sent a young woman named Melanie Young for OSPCA training to be an inspector. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society was very proud of Melanie, because she had a strong sense of compassion for animals and also a healthy respect for the rights of people. The OSPCA failed Melanie as an inspector. They said she did not have an aggressive enough enforcement attitude. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society stood by Melanie and divorced themselves from the OSPCA and their aggressive ways. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society has been an independent, self-funding animal shelter since 1985.

Police powers: All police forces in Canada have oversight and accountability mechanisms in place so that police officers can be held accountable for their actions. This is a necessary, understood and accepted practice.

Without the necessary oversight and accountability, the OSPCA has become an organization run amok. But instead of fixing the blatant problems that have become glaringly obvious to anyone paying attention, the provincial government is expanding the powers of the OSPCA with this bill.

The case of Pauliuk versus the government, identified by a legislative library researcher at the request of my office, clearly documents the inherent conflict of interest that is embedded in the governance model of the OSPCA. The conflict of interest inherent in the private funding/private policing model was one of the main issues facing Justice A. Zuraw of the Ontario Court of Justice in the case of the crown versus Pauliuk, decided in 2005. Pauliuk involved the alleged mistreatment of 10 horses seized from her small farm by the Hamilton/Burlington Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

At trial, the defence argued that the society's investigation was publicity-driven, financially motivated and dependent on the evidence of witnesses with financial interests. Indeed, the evidence presented to the court revealed these points:

The society had issued flowery press releases while the horses were in its custody. These included appeals for money, and stated that the society would be required to pay for all the expenses arising from the seizure and on-going care of the animals.

The society's inspector delayed laying charges for almost six months after the horses had been seized.

Dr. Mogavero, the veterinarian who signed the certificate authorizing the society to seize the horses, was also a member of the society's board of directors. His duties as a board member included fundraising.

Dr. Mogavero was on retainer with the society in his capacity as a veterinarian. His usual practice was to give the society a deep discount. In this case, however, he charged over \$6,000 for his services, for which he was paid in full.

In addressing the issue of the neutrality and fairness of the investigators, Judge Zuraw made the following observations about the society's operations:

"It hires its own agents and inspectors, determines the parameters of their employment, and using afore-

mentioned police powers, enters property, seizes animals as in this case (without warrant or judicial intervention) and lays charges—all the while attending to its own need to fundraise. In order to do the latter, it relies heavily on the publicity it can glean from high-profile seizures and charges. Indeed, there is a communications branch tasked with this. It is a not-for-profit organization and a registered charity. Without publicity and high-profile charges, the funds the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals needs to operate would no doubt dry up.

"It goes without saying that a strong and active enforcement of animal cruelty laws must be maintained. But I would be naïve to suggest that the current set-up could not foster the perception in reasonable, open-minded people, that bias may exist and that conflicts will result. However trite it may be, it is still true that 'Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done.' It is unfortunate, for example, that Dr. Mogavero, a highly qualified and well-respected professional, was placed in the position he was in this case. He directed the operation of the society, he earned money from the society, he helped fundraise for the society, he was concerned for the budgetary needs of the society, he took part in the investigation, made the decision to seize the horses, made the decision to board and care for the horses, and profited from so doing."

1700

Judge Zuraw concluded that the perception of bias arising from these facts was fatal to the prosecution's case and dismissed the charges against the farm owner, Mrs. Pauliuk, who suffered a great deal of worry, stress, and financial loss, not to mention her horses.

Marineland is a responsible caretaker of their zoo. It is regularly inspected and is good to their animals. Animal rights activists infiltrated the staff and made unfounded reports about Kiska, the orca whale. The banning of the possession of orca whales in the future is an unfounded attack on Marineland. By extension, this is an attack against all zoos across Ontario.

Marineland is a significant employer in the Niagara area. Kiska is the main attraction. This bill is the result of the infiltration of Marineland and the OSPCA by animal rights extremists and will create unnecessary hardship for Marineland.

There are numerous other stories of abuse and maltreatment by the OSPCA, but I only have time to highlight three today to make the point that the OSPCA is out of control and needs to be reined in.

John Nyenhuis is a farmer. One summer, John Nyenhuis of Sebringville, a hog farmer, had five pigs with belly button hernias, which is a common problem in pigs, pigs which were otherwise in excellent condition and safe to eat. He called Ontario Pork, his organization, to ask their advice on how to handle the hogs in the most humane way and was advised to put the pigs on a separate small truck and take them to a local small slaughterhouse.

He loaded them up and took them to slaughter for his own family's consumption. Upon arriving at the local

slaughterhouse, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs inspectors had a look at the pigs. The CFIA inspector viewed the pigs to be in good condition, but the OMAFRA inspector felt the pigs were suffering, so he killed the pigs on the spot with a hammer and sent pictures of the bloody scene to the OSPCA and the OMAFRA veterinarian. The OSPCA charged Nyenhuis with animal abuse. He went to court. He pleaded guilty and paid a \$750 fine, and he paid his lawyer.

John transported his pigs in a proper and humane way and is one of the best hog farmers in Ontario. His veterinarian said that John runs a very well managed farm and had done everything he should to be humane to the pigs.

Gianna Tramontin, a teacher, lived in Etobicoke with her 16-year-old husky dog named Rocky. Rocky had a bed, food and water in the backyard and had been treated for some 14 years for arthritis and various ailments by the same vet, Heather Hannah. One day, while Mrs. Tramontin was at work, the OSPCA seized her dog, Rocky, and left a notice on the door. Upon reading the note when she got home, Mrs. Tramontin phoned the OSPCA, who told her that Rocky was being treated, but that was not true. Without telling Mrs. Tramontin, Rocky had been euthanized the same day by the OSPCA.

Sunny Reuter boarded her dog, Arko, in a kennel while she and her daughter went on vacation. Arko was a Turkish Akbash, a rare breed of dog that is fine-boned and slim-bodied. The OSPCA mistakenly thought Arko was a Great Pyrenees dog, a much heavier bodied breed, assumed he was emaciated, and had him euthanized mere hours before Sunny returned home. Even though they had her phone number, the OSPCA did not bother to call Sunny's sister prior to killing the dog. Upon being informed of their mistake, the OSPCA responded and threatened Sunny with criminal charges. Only after Sunny was able to produce a veterinarian's report verifying Arko's good health prior to boarding him were the charges withdrawn.

In conclusion, I would say I could go on for hours telling stories of the OSPCA misdeeds, so numerous are the accounts. The OSPCA cares not for the truth, nor for the people and the families that they terrorize—and yes, I mean terrorize. Often people decide to give up their livelihoods rather than fight the OSPCA and potentially lose everything. The people that do decide to fight, and even those that don't, often suffer severe consequences to their health and well-being.

The examples I have shared with you today are not isolated incidents, but highlight a pattern of totalitarian behaviour that has, sadly, become entrenched in the organization, as the bullies never suffer consequences for their abusive behaviour.

When organizations are allowed to make up their own rules and are given expansive policing powers, it inevitably leads to abuse. This is not the only abusive organization empowered by this government, but it is one of the worst. Prior to giving the OSPCA further powers, the provincial government needs to clean up the mess it has

created and restore sanity to the system, not reward the bullies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed again a pleasure to stand and make comments referenced by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

While the member was speaking, I was thinking back about 25 years ago when I joined with a buddy and his family and we took our kids to Marineland. We had a wonderful day. As I'm sitting here today trying to remember if I saw an orca or not, I can't recall. I think I saw some dolphins. I don't remember seeing an orca. Maybe that was before Kiska, or someone else was entertaining the troops.

When I go to Florida, Fort Myers Beach, when you're walking down the beach you look out and you hope to see a dolphin, just to watch the dolphins in their feeding run just off the beach. Sometimes you see three or four of them really close to shore, and it makes the day. Kids get a big kick out of it. Sometimes when you're down there you go up to Manatee Park and look at the manatees—not as exciting, but still a wonderful creature.

When you think about the orca, and I'm reminded of when I was a city councillor for seven years—orcas being black and white, and skunks being black and white. We had an issue one time dealing with whether we should kill skunks or not. I have never received more emails than kill-don't kill skunks. PETA picked it up and put it around the world. I had more emails from California than I did from Windsor on the killing of skunks. I have not had one email or conversation about Bill 80, the OSPCA amendments.

It just shows you the public's imagination. You can latch on to something and it blossoms up into something really big and controversial, or you have this other piece of legislation that we get fixated on for a while here but I'm not sure, out in the general public, it's really capturing their imagination. I bet you if you bring in a bill that says we're going to kill skunks, you'll get a lot more attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for this opportunity to provide a few comments on the previous member's presentation and speech. I have to say I listened carefully for two minutes and I got lost in what he was telling us, because I have a feeling it was a repeat of a debate we did back in 2009, when we first brought in some controls for the OSPCA and animals all together.

He seemed to have a lot of complaints about that act and a lot of complaints about the OSPCA, but I never heard him offer one solution. I'm sitting here thinking, does he really believe we need to live in a lawless society? I have trouble understanding him and adding comments to this particular speech that he made.

1710

But Mr. Speaker, I have to say to you that the situation that we're in is because the government is actually bring-

ing in legislation, because we have a marine mammal that is in Marineland, and the public has decided that that's not the right place for it, and we all agree. In fact, everyone who has spoken so far agrees. In fact, all his colleagues who have spoken agree. So I really had difficulty trying to follow his direction—where we're going to go and what we're going to do—but I hope that, through all of this, we will send this bill to committee, the bill will come back here, and hopefully we will adopt it, and these marine mammals will not be brought into what I would say is storage in the future. The one that we have today, I think all of us would agree, you don't want to take it back and put it in the wild, because it's been out of the wild for so long. It makes absolutely no sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, a valuable presentation by the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. In spite of comments from the government side, this legislation is all about the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I mean, it doesn't have the title “killer whale” or anything like that. I know people like to talk about killer whales and other marine mammals, but the legislation itself is designed to affect the original Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. In fact, Bill 80 is titled the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2015. It's perhaps passing strange that the government is not talking about the OSPCA.

We know that the minister will be given, in the future, undefined or unexplained regulatory powers. As the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has indicated, it's obvious that we do need more powers in the hands of the minister to have more oversight over the OSPCA and to hold this organization more accountable.

We do know that, for example, OSPCA inspectors would be able to demand production of records. They don't need to go on-site to do an inspection—maybe that's a good thing, maybe that's a bad thing. But this is legislation that's all about the OSPCA, and I found it quite heartening that somebody stood up and talked about the OSPCA for 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills regarding his position on Bill 80. While I don't always agree with what the member states, I respect his position, and I also question somewhat the government's position, particularly their challenge that his remarks weren't related to the bill, because obviously in the title of the bill, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals for Research Act—basically, it's about the OSPCA.

The OSPCA, while it provides a vital role—I don't think anyone is going to deny that we need oversight, but there are some bad actors in among the people who work with animals. But there is also a lack of an appeal process

and a lack of ministerial oversight, and some people in this province, not to their own fault, do live in fear of the OSPCA.

I can give you a personal experience. I have a really good relationship with our local OSPCA. My wife had an antiques store across the street from our dairy farm and she had a horse, and the horse was lying flat out in the field. The OSPCA inspector came to the store and saw the horse lying flat out in the field, and she right away wanted to know who owned the farm, because obviously this horse was distressed. It was a bright, sunny day; this horse was distressed. My wife walked out onto the porch, she yelled, “Hey, Velvet!”, and the horse got up. We came and fed the horse, and everything was fine. It was a learning experience for us all.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The horse was resting.

Mr. John Vanthof: But the OSPCA inspector didn't know that. These are the things we have to look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the members who spoke to this bill from Windsor–Tecumseh, Scarborough–Rouge River, Haldimand–Norfolk and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River asked what we would like done. We should dismiss this bill as a bad idea. It's not necessary because there is no need. Marineland takes good care of their whale.

Zoos fill an important need in our communities. They serve an educational purpose for families and children and people in general to go and see animals that they could see nowhere else. Zoos always want to have healthy, good-looking animals in a good state of health so that people get a positive impression. Anything else would be unsatisfactory.

Marineland knows what they're doing. They have veterinarian inspections regularly of their whale. It is a healthy whale. If anything, what it needs is a partner. I think what we should do is be passing a bill to buy one more whale, and that would make for a happy Kiska. So I would suggest in committee that we make that amendment to the bill, that we add a whale.

It's unfortunate that the real amendment that should happen to the OSPCA Act is—like a private member's bill I had three years ago when I first got here to Queen's Park, which would have provided oversight and accountability over this private police force. It is absolutely a wrongful thing that you would have in place within a private charity people with, effectively, police powers, yet they must do fundraising through their charity to pay their way. Clearly, that is a conflict. We would never have a policeman writing speeding tickets so he can pay his own wages. Why do we think untrained enforcers with the OSPCA, who have absolutely no oversight over their professional ability, let alone their fundraising, should have that kind of power? That's the kind of amendment that should be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure, obviously, to stand up to talk about Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act. I will say, though the issue of cruelty to animals does come to my office, the issue of Marineland and orcas has not. Yet, I do think that it's incumbent upon all of us, as legislators—clearly, the member from Parkdale–High Park has been an advocate in this field for quite some time and simply wants to have this debate happen.

This has been one of the strangest debates, though, I have to say, that I have ever participated in in this House. We have heard about dogs, cats, polar bears, skunks and goldfish. I really have to tell you, I honestly sometimes struggle with this kind of a debate. But I want to pull it back to the context of why we are here and perhaps we may find our way, if you put things into context.

I do want to say at the onset, of course, that the ONDP welcomes legislation that would strengthen protection for marine animals in the province's marine parks and aquariums, as well as regulate the conditions in which these large animals can be observed or utilized. Of course, we do believe in good governance, and that is part of this piece of legislation, which is good. When you have strong governance functions in place, you often have more ethical operational aspects of a business and there is an accountability as well. Governance does matter. It matters, actually, in a lot of different fields. But we're not talking about those fields today, like energy or finance.

These amendments, of course, add to the existing legislation already in place, but it's meant to protect animals subject to captivity or experimentation. We haven't really talked a lot about the research component of this legislation, and that oversight actually is very much needed in this province. The plight of one whale in one—what do you call it?

1720

Ms. Cindy Forster: Marineland, one park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: In one park, it's important, but the issue of research and the experimentation on animals across the province—that's happening behind closed doors. It's happening around the province, and I think that there have to be some ethical considerations in that.

The amendments would make the selling and acquisition or breeding of orcas for captivity prohibited in Ontario. This legislation, obviously, would also amend the Animals for Research Act, which would allow the OSPCA greater oversight over the conditions for large marine animals used in research.

I think, once again, that when we have debates in this place you can see how differently we see these issues. The previous member, who was really focused on the OSPCA and thinks that perhaps getting another whale and putting another whale in captivity is going to rectify the situation, is clearly not where we are, nor would it be, in my estimation, very ethical.

The amended act also would provide for the setting of regulations around the keeping, care and use of other

marine mammals such as walruses and dolphins. So this isn't really just about one whale; this is about shifting a whole culture around mammals and animals in captivity and creating some better oversight around the research and the experimentation, which is becoming more and more political. It's just not very open. There isn't a big pool, and people don't pay a lot of money to come in and watch the animals. The research piece is very, very key.

The expected regulations governing the existing captivity of large marine mammals—specifically this one mammal, Kiska, the only killer orca in captivity in the province—will increase the size of enclosures and limit sound exposure for the animals. We've already heard several members discuss some of those issues.

What I would really like to do, though, Mr. Speaker, is to focus more broadly on the context of this debate around the interactions of humans and whales, because there's a reason why this piece of legislation is here, and it does intersect with the way that humans see whales and the way that humans crave knowledge about whales. I think, actually, it goes back in a very true sense to our own curiosity about nature and, obviously, points to our disconnection from nature. We are living, more and more, very isolated lives, very focused on technology. We crave those experiences, but we try to get them through technology. So there is this inherent curiosity that we have, as human beings, to better understand nature. The problem is that when we interject into the process of nature, often humans mess it up pretty good, and I think we have a lot of instances of that over history, not just in Ontario but of course the world.

I think curiosity has drawn us to this issue, but the issue of whales in captivity, particularly orca whales, has been the subject of much public discussion and debate, actually, not just in Ontario but throughout North America, especially since the release of the documentary called *Blackfish*, which came out in 2013. Since then, as marine mammal theme parks increased in popularity throughout the world, there have been many examples that have demonstrated the controversy around orcas in captivity. Some members have already mentioned some of them, but you do have Wanda, the first orca in captivity, who died after one day. You have, of course, Keiko, who is the subject of *Free Willy*, who died after being returned to the wild. Ironically, just to make my point about how humans truly can mess up nature, in this instance humans were trying to teach a whale how to be a whale. It's ridiculous; there's no other word for it. Their intentions were good, but you can't unlearn what you've already learned, and certainly humans haven't gotten the point.

I see that the minister of curmudgeonry is actually leaving the building, which is probably not a bad thing right now.

Springer was the third whale and first orca returned to the wild successfully, so it can be done. Luna, another orca, returned to the wild and died.

The issues and the popularity around these theme parks have existed almost since the day the first orca was captured and displayed in Newport Harbor in California

in 1961. So this is a long-standing issue, right? The debate on whether that was a good idea for people or for whales began the next day but didn't really heat up until the 1970s. This came from the opposition to whaling, the whaling industry that had been a key part of the formation, of course, of Greenpeace and the environmental social movement; it also drove people to think about whales in captivity. You saw the slaughter of millions of whales. In fact, a report just came out, March 11, 2015, that's finally done a tally, and it's a sad stat to read into Hansard, but I think it's probably worth it.

The commercial hunting wiped out almost three million animals last century—three million. Blue whales, in particular, have been depleted by 90%, and these populations are slow to recover. People are so curious about them and want the knowledge, but these industries have been able to carry on as if these populations are not at risk.

Clearly, there's cause for concern around whale populations, and then there is this counterpoint of whales in captivity, which of course has been generated and increased in popularity because of people's curiosity. But the debate on whales in captivity raged mostly on the fringe for the next 25 years. It picked up steam in the mid-1990s with the release of the film *Free Willy*—it's already been mentioned—and the attempt to rehabilitate the orca star. We can go through the story of Keiko, the story of Springer and the story of Luna.

The story of Luna—actually I did watch this documentary. I caught it one day I was home. I watched the documentary; actually, my friend from Cape Breton was one of the film directors, documentarian Suzanne Chisholm. It was a heart-breaking documentary to watch because you want that happy ending, and yet there were so many forces at play in the story of Luna, the orphaned whale who was friendly with the Nootka Sound First Nations population. Then the government of Canada tried to capture Luna to reunite it with its pod, but the First Nations of course felt a stronger connection to the whale—it's actually hard to imagine the government of Canada having a connection with almost anything right now, particularly—and the plan to gradually lead the whale back into the ocean to reunite with the pod came of course to a tragic ending. I think we all know how this ends. Once again, human intervention led to needless suffering and the death of that whale.

It's easy to look at marine mammal parks as either worthwhile attractions that can help educate people about whales or as man-made animal prisons that exist to use the animals until they die prematurely. People are usually very strongly in either camp. People aren't usually in the middle, on the fence. They feel very strongly about that, and probably that's one of the motivations as to how this piece of legislation, Bill 80, came to this floor.

While we did hunt whales to near extinction in the 20th century, an international moratorium on whale hunting was agreed to in 1986. Actually, I remember this. This was part of the curriculum at the time because I was still in high school in 1986. Only a few remaining coun-

tries—Japan, Iceland and Norway—continue to have whaling industries, and even those face intense scrutiny for their use around legal loopholes to get around the moratorium.

While we once trapped whales en masse for our marine mammal parks, whales are no longer trapped and the viability of keeping them in captivity continues to be debated, the outcome being the improvement of conditions for captive whales.

As we collectively continue to grapple with humanity's role, if you will, on this planet and place in the hierarchy of species, we must ask ourselves constantly: Is this action making the planet better? This leads usually to a fairly strong ethical debate.

I was reading one paper on—this is why this job is so great: You just never know what you're going to be reading in the course of a day. I was reading *The Ethics of Keeping Whales and Dolphins Captive*. It's from chapter 13 of the *Performing Orca—Why the Show Must Stop*. The author is Erich Hoyt, and he had some really interesting things to say about the ethics of this issue. One of my former research positions was in ethics. His research says that the empirical data has shown that cetaceans—cetaceans?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Citations?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, no. Anyway, whales suffer “varying degrees of stress and trauma during capture and captivity. The same may not be true of the third generation” of animals that are in captivity. “But, after weighing all the evidence, the committee concluded that whales should ‘not be subjected to the possibility of deprivation or suffering which conditions and quality of life in captivity might occasion.’”

1730

“Ethical arguments against keeping orcas captive sometimes cite the importance of culture in orcas and the intensity of family ties.” It is incredible to learn about these animals. I've always been so curious about them. I was that kid in grade 4 who brought in the National Geographic, the little plastic album that you used to have. I brought it in, and we listened to the whales. The kids were amazed that there was this communication system with these beautiful animals.

In “7 Things About Wild Orca Whales You'll Never Learn at SeaWorld” there's one really important point, and that is that females rule. I just like to say that, of course: Females rule.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Girls rule, eh?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. I'm going to mention that tomorrow when I speak at Equal Voice about women and politics. I'm going to transition the orca debate into politics and the new environment of women and politics: Equal Voice Toronto tomorrow night at Samara. There you go. I don't have a phone number like the member from Timmins.

But anyway, “Females Rule: Resident orca societies, dominated by females, are populated by intensely social whales that travel in large stable groups centered on a matriarch, typically the oldest living female. Adult

females are easily distinguished from adult males by their dorsal fins....

“Residents travel in matri-focal units called matrilineal groups.” These groups usually consist of a reproductive female and her dependent calves and juveniles and adolescents. The boys don’t leave. They don’t leave until they get set up by the mum. That’s why they’re called momma’s boys. There’s actually a section here: “The outstanding feature’ of resident orca society is that neither sex wanders from the natal family and its home range.... The lifelong bonds between resident mothers and sons run deep.”

When you think about these animals in that context, it’s hard to imagine them living in isolation in a tank and having people stare at them. Over the years we’ve seen animals in captivity, and I think instinctively we recognize that there’s something fundamentally wrong about it. So of course we’re supportive of a piece of legislation which brings in some stronger oversight. I think oversight always has to be—there have to be measures of control and quality in that oversight. Even Marineland has publicly accepted and welcomed the introduction of Bill 80, saying that they meet or exceed the Canadian Council on Animal Care guidelines. If that’s what they say, then there’s going to be some oversight. I think this can be done in a balanced and measured way.

For myself, though, I’m one of those people who would prefer to be out in nature, even though I grew up in the inner city. The only trees I saw for a long time when I was growing up were in Boyne River in the outdoor education programs outside of Toronto, which I was quite fortunate to actually have.

But there’s a really interesting dynamic happening now with people like myself who have a genuine curiosity about nature and about animals, and who value research, and would rather sit down and watch a documentary instead of a Disney film, if you will. Through social media, we are developing a new connection to nature which is not invasive at all. I’m following Lydia; @RockStarLydia is a shark. I’m following her on Twitter. She has 13,000 followers, which is more than some of us in this room—actually more than most of us. She’s the first great white shark that’s ever been recorded to cross the Atlantic, and then under her Twitverse it says, “Oh, Canada eh” because we’ve adopted her, I guess.

And I’m also following Katherine The . Shark, @Shark_Katharine, who has 30,000 followers.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Kind of like you.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’m not quite a shark.

But last year, I had the pleasure of meeting this beautiful young woman in my riding and I was able to nominate her for the Leading Girls Building Communities awards that we’re able to do as MPPs. Her name is Shark Warrior Jr. She was in grade 5 last year; grade 6 this year. She is telling the story about all the good things about sharks. Of course, as a young activist, a young environmentalist, she is supportive of Bill 80, the Ontario

Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, I think that I’ve said pretty much everything that I possibly could say about this piece of legislation. But I do want to say that sometimes the debates in this House are not always easy to navigate—where we are personally.

This piece of legislation, if passed—and by all accounts it will be; who could really vote against it?—should be fast-tracked. We should get it done. We should listen to the public consultation, of course, and make it stronger or adapt it to address some of the gaps in this piece of legislation.

I think, though, that what’s important to understand is the importance of biodiversity, of maintaining the viability of species and ecosystems and how our actions today impact the planet in decades to come. Today’s debate is pretty much a good point in the global warming piece as well. There are tangible ways for us to protect our environment and to protect the species in those environments. Obviously, mitigating risk is one of the foremost ways to do so.

I look forward to this piece of legislation getting to committee and ensuring that we are doing everything that we can to protect animals who are part of research and experimentation and, obviously, animals in captivity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I’m just going to relate an incident that I can recall from my childhood. My dad worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources for 40 years. One of his jobs was to transport the animals from Springwater park to the sportsmen’s show and to the Royal Winter Fair. Well, I was very fortunate that I got to go with my dad when he did that. When I look back on it now, it was very exciting for me.

Now, wolves at that time were not considered a positive animal. As you know, they were vilified. We know now how important they are and what magnificent creatures they are. I loved to go with my dad, but Jack the wolf was more like Jack the puppy dog. Basically, his spirit was broken. When I look back now and think about it, he was being fed lots, and he was being well cared for, but you could tell that his spirit was gone. He no longer was that beautiful beast that was able to roam free all over the woods.

I think it’s very important that we make sure that the animals stay where they should in the environment where they are the healthiest and where there’s a circle of life, and that as much as possible we don’t interfere with that circle of life.

I urge everyone to get this bill to the committee, and let’s get this passed and set in motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s a pleasure to stand and rise and reply to the remarks from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. It’s quite interesting, the debate this afternoon. I listened to quite a bit of it. I’ve heard some stuff I’d never heard before. I guess I don’t get out much.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You said that, not us.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. Some of the books and—I don't watch a lot of those kinds of shows.

Anyway, I found it quite interesting when the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about the momma's boys and that the female was out trying to find mates. I could relate to that, because that's what my wife has been trying to do with my two sons. So when she said that, it made me think of that. Life actually recreates in this chamber, if you listen long enough, and you're here long enough.

Katharine the shark—I thought I had an image there for a minute. I'll have to find that book. Maybe the member from Kitchener–Waterloo can refer that to me.

1740

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm sure the library has a copy.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Maybe the library, yes. I'm just down the hall from the library.

It's been very interesting. I think all the members have had different experiences and comments, whether it's zoos or these different organizations where they do keep these animals in captivity. I know I'm torn with it; I grew up in a different era, when you didn't question these kinds of things. You went to the Shrine Circus with the elephants—

Mr. Bill Walker: You can't even have those now.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Even the Shriners have dropped the elephant show now. That's no longer going to happen.

Interjection: Barnum and Bailey.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bob Bailey is my favourite.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, Bob Bailey. So anyway—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Bob, you're moving to the front row soon.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't know if you're going to get me in the front row. But anyway, it's amazing how lives change if you live around here long enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her 20 minutes of input into this bill. I think it's an important bill. There has been a lot of controversy over this issue, certainly in the south end of this province, but Marineland is not unlike other events in Niagara Falls. They have a butterfly conservatory. They have the Bird Kingdom, the Niagara Falls aviary and conservatory.

Those attractions attract hundreds of thousands of people to Niagara Falls every year. They create revenue. They support jobs—probably hundreds of thousands of jobs. Youth in our communities around Niagara have worked in those kinds of venues for many, many years. But my hope is that when this bill gets passed, and if it gets passed quickly after public consultation, it will actually be implemented.

We all know, only having sat here for a very short period of time—four years—that there were things this government has committed to do around reviewing the

CCACs that have never happened. They committed to actually reviewing the long-term-care sector, doing inspections in those nursing homes; it took seven years to actually get those nursing homes inspected. I'm told that there was not one order written as a result of those inspections, but just last night we actually watched a W5 program with respect to the abuse in our long-term-care homes.

If this government is real about this bill, then they should move forward, have the consultation and get on with business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss Bill 80. I would also like to say thank you to all the members, particularly the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, for very insightful comments on our Bill 80.

When I think about everything that has been discussed today—now, going back, I would like to focus a little bit on our orca and the reason why we're suggesting our orca shouldn't be—

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: In captivity.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:—in captivity—thank you—in our aquarium here. When you look at the orca, which I had the great pleasure of seeing in the wild, and the amount of travel time that this wonderful mammal has to go through every single day, and looking back at how unfortunate it is when they are in captivity and the reflection on them—certainly I can say that it's nice to see them, but I think that as humans we will appreciate it a lot more to see them actually in the wild, which I had the great pleasure to do, as I mentioned.

Anyone travelling to Tadoussac should go and see them there. They're wonderful. They're one of the largest marine mammals in captivity, in Ontario or anywhere else. When you talked about “twice the length”—they are over twice the length and four times the mass of a beluga, the next largest mammal in captivity.

As I mentioned, they travel a lot. Orcas typically dive 500 feet or more and can swim up to 100 miles per day, the approximate distance from this Legislature to Belleville.

Certainly, as such, our proposed amendments to the OSPCA Act would immediately prohibit breeding and acquisition of orcas in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the members from Barrie, Samia–Lambton, Welland and Ottawa–Orléans for their comments.

I essentially wanted to leave this debate with the ethical arguments against captivity. I want to cite again the paper by Erich Hoyt. He says that perhaps the clearest explanation of the ethical arguments has been given by former US federal biologist and chairman of the Marine Mammal Commission, Victor Scheffer.

He says: “‘At the core of humaneness,’ he wrote in the final chapter ..., ‘is the idea of kind-ness, or the idea that we and the other animals are basically of one kind.’ To Scheffer, the key is that we are all ‘part of the living animal world ... caught up together in a sort of spiritual biomass’ and therefore ‘we have the right to insist not only that animals be spared distress (pain and fear) but that they be used in ways acceptable to large numbers of thoughtful men and women.’”

“Scheffer confessed an ‘inability to deal adequately with the problem of how one learns what the general public wants from, and for, the whales, seals and other marine mammals,’ adding: ‘I myself believe that what men and women are saying today about them is, “Let them be.”’”

But the real argument is an emotional argument, and I think you’ve heard that here today—an emotional or perhaps a sentimental argument.

He says, “I believe, quite simply, that sentiment is one of the best reasons for saving not only some of these animals, but all of them.”

I think that a piece of legislation that can be put in place, as I said, to not only deal with this one animal but with others in captivity—and to address the research and experimentation on animals is also a worthwhile element of this legislation.

I hope that we can accelerate this. I think this is something that, actually, we can accomplish together in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill.

This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, we wish debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a very distinct honour for me to have the chance to spend a bit of time this afternoon in the Legislature, providing my input with respect to this particular piece of legislation, Bill 80, the marine mammals act.

Speaker, I want to notify you that I’ll be sharing my time with my good friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I have had the chance throughout the proceedings today to listen to members from all three caucuses on this particular bill, and to have heard so many different interesting facts and figures. We hear that often when it comes to debating different pieces of legislation in this chamber.

What I found fascinating about today’s debate and the discussion is the degree to which there is broad support

amongst members from all three parties with respect to making sure that we move forward with finding a creative way to provide additional protections, as this bill contemplates.

But I think I was actually struck by more than just the facts, the figures, the analysis—which I’ll get into a little bit, even though I know that many who have spoken before me have had the chance to provide a lot of what I’ll call technical information in support of moving forward with Bill 80. What I was struck by the most was the extent to which people have brought very personal experiences to bear in the debate this afternoon. I think that actually speaks volumes about the passions.

I know a speaker earlier this afternoon talked about how, when you’re dealing with issues relating to animals, relating to wildlife, relating to how we, as humans, interact with animals and wildlife, they can often be a very passionate discussion.

Certainly, we’ve seen over the years, when media has cast a spotlight on issues relating to some of what we’re discussing today, it certainly has caught the attention of hundreds and hundreds of individuals.

I think you’ll understand, Speaker, and certainly, again, from the debate this afternoon, we’ve heard fairly clearly that there is a great degree of support for moving forward with it. It is very balanced and responsive legislation around this particular matter.

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I think that both the current minister of correctional services and community safety—or vice versa, community safety and correctional services; I always get the CSs and the CSs confused—and also the former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who is here in the chamber this afternoon to hear some of this debate, both deserve a great deal of credit with respect to moving forward and showing the leadership that they have on this particular bill.

Certainly I say this, as I often say in the chamber, as the father of two young children, a seven- and a four-year-old, both girls. We have not yet had the opportunity, for example—and I know it has been discussed a lot this afternoon—to make the trek down to Marineland to see what that wonderful institution, that wonderful facility or theme park, has to offer.

I know that whenever we have had the opportunity to visit the Toronto zoo and other venues like that, there’s a great deal of very genuine excitement, not surprisingly, not just on the part of my own kids but on the part of myself and my wife and others who travel to those venues.

I believe it was the member from Ottawa South, earlier this afternoon, who referenced his own daughter, Kirsten, who he had made a commitment to a number of years ago in terms of getting out to Marineland, and he reiterated that commitment right here in the chamber this afternoon. It’s something that I definitely look forward to having the chance to do with my own daughters.

A number of others who have spoken today have talked about some of the specifics of the bill. I’ve learned

a lot today about not only the bill itself but about what we are talking about with respect to the orcas. It's fascinating information. The member from Ottawa-Orléans just went through a series of fascinating facts and points about these particular mammals. It's not something that I think a lot of people out there would understand. I don't want to repeat the entire list that was provided. We certainly have heard about the abilities that orcas have to typically dive 500 feet or more, for example. They can swim up to 100 miles per day. I heard these facts and figures, and they actually are not just interesting; I think they really and truly are fascinating.

When we have this opportunity to pass legislation in this House on a regular basis, sometimes we deal—certainly, in my own portfolio, we deal with a lot of what I'll call hard infrastructure issues. This is a matter, this is an issue, this is legislation that has really and truly struck a fascinating chord amongst the public. We've heard this afternoon that there has already been extensive debate on this. I know there will continue to be debate today. My colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will speak momentarily.

I think it definitely is legislation that deserves continued support from all members of all three caucuses here in the Legislature. I look forward to this bill passing at second reading, getting to committee for additional hearings and analysis and research that may need to be done, coming back here for third reading, for more debate and for eventual support.

Again, both the current and former ministers responsible for this particular issue, and the Premier herself, deserve a lot of credit for showing this kind of leadership. I look forward to the rest of the debate and having this legislation passed as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's really a delight to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record on Bill 80. It's about seven minutes to 6 in the great riding of Peterborough. I can just see the people—Cogeco, cable 95—they're all tuned in for this very exciting moment when they get the opportunity to see their member put a few words on the record. I want to say hello to everybody who's watching on Cogeco, cable 95, in the wonderful riding of Peterborough.

Peterborough has an interesting history with regard to a zoo. We have the Riverview Park and Zoo, which is unique, my friends, in the province of Ontario. It started with a very interesting situation. The late Ross Dobbin ran the Peterborough Utilities service. He was an engineer on the water side. In those days, the American Water Works Association would have their annual meeting in the wintertime—and you guessed it—in Florida. They used to bring them from around the country to go to Florida for their annual meeting, which was great. They'd go to Orlando or Clearwater for their annual meeting.

The late Ross Dobbin was down there for that meeting. The gift that he got from the North American water

works association was an alligator. So Ross has this alligator delivered from Orlando back to the city of Peterborough. Ross and his colleagues at the Peterborough Utilities service said, "What are we going to do with an alligator?" You know, you've got to provide a habitat for it and look after it and all that kind of thing. So it was his brain child, after consulting with the community, that we establish a zoo. The very first animal in that zoo in Peterborough was this wonderful alligator that came from Orlando, Florida. That was the starting point of a zoo in Peterborough.

Over the years, I know my friend from Kitchener-Waterloo, who knows Peterborough extremely well—the Riverview Park and Zoo is on a beautiful location: Water Street North, on your way to Trent University, right on the Otonabee River. Over the years they've expanded the zoo. I know when my kids, Braden and Shanae, were young, when they were three, four, five—

Mr. Grant Crack: Good kids.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, they're excellent kids. They're now 15 and 17. We would go, Karan and I, for our picnic there every Sunday afternoon and take the kids around. It was a delightful experience. I just want to pay tribute to Karan, who did an excellent job putting together that picnic lunch. That was our first kind of exposure to the Riverview zoo.

Mr. Speaker, I know you want me to get on to talking about Bill 80. As they were a little older, we made our first trip to Niagara Falls, to Marineland. I remember the day we were there: It was hot. It was about 33 Celsius in the shade that day. But we were there and we got to enjoy Marineland, which is a terrific asset to the province of Ontario.

I'm going to have the opportunity in a couple of days, along with Minister Chan, to leave on a trade mission to China, but what's interesting about Marineland are all the people from around the world who come and visit Marineland—you know, the world comes to Marineland and Niagara Falls. It was a great experience for Karan, Braden, Shanae and I to go to Marineland.

There has been a lot of good work that has been done. The groundwork was laid by my good friend and colleague in front of me who is now the very distinguished Attorney General for the province of Ontario.

Applause.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, a hand is in order for her great work. When she was Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and now in her role as Attorney General, there were numerous people who came and met in New York and really impressed upon her why Bill 80 and animal welfare is so important to the province of Ontario and indeed as the standard for the rest of the country.

There are many large cities in Canada that are home to great zoos, but we want to make sure that Ontario sets the gold standard. Animal welfare is important to us all. I know the great honour I have of being the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Animal welfare is

very important to our ag community. Let me say that the ag community of Ontario goes to the nth degree to make sure that animal welfare is of incredible importance to them each and every day as they're working on their farms.

We'll have a great opportunity, Minister Chan and I, being in four cities in China, to take the opportunity to promote the great food that is grown and processed in the province of Ontario; we know that is second to none. We want to make sure—Mr. Speaker, I know you want me to get back to the bill and not kind of meander a bit into areas that I'm so happy about—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm getting some heckling from my good friend, Mr. Walker, over there, and Mr. Pettapiece.

Easy, guys; I know you like to provide some interjections.

It's important, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that we get this bill off to committee, an opportunity for folks from right around the province of Ontario to have input. Bill 80 is of incredible importance to the province of Ontario. I'm sure at the end of the day it will get support from all three sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I know you're going to rise because my time is up.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, it is 6 of the clock. As such, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment / Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 April 2015

Mardi 14 avril 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 1, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this issue the member for Scarborough Southwest had the floor. The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I'll pick up where I was speaking last time. I just wanted to remind the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. Both the member from Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough—Agincourt will be speaking shortly after me.

We are discussing Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. I think the key to this bill, which I was talking about last time, is that it provides another tool for people to save money for a pension plan. As we all know, not even 50% of the people in Ontario have pensions or save for pensions. I think we as a government have an obligation to encourage people to put aside money for when they retire.

In my riding there are many people who come to see me—older people—and say, "I don't have much money to retire." They are in their sixties looking for jobs. It's not a very pleasant situation to be in.

When someone's younger they think, "I'll contribute later," but you have to start as early as possible. And when you start reaching my age, you've got to realize that when you stop working you've got to have enough money to survive the rest of your life.

I think our government is committed to implementing a bold new strategy to enhance this province's retirement

income security. That's about all I want to say at this point. We do have other speakers on this matter and I could just pass it on to the other two members that I mentioned earlier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for the continuation of the debate.

I ask the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 57 this morning, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. Of course, this is a commitment the government made through the fall economic statement. We followed through in terms of introducing legislation last December. It's an important piece of the puzzle in our efforts to enhance retirement income security for all Ontarians.

This is partly spawned by the federal government's unwillingness to enhance the CPP, which most Ontarians, indeed most Canadians, are dependent upon. For instance, in my riding of Ottawa South—and even in my own family, my father, who was on the Ontario Parole Board and the Federal Parole Board, did not actually have a pension, so he was dependent upon his RRSPs and the Canada Pension Plan. As he got older, he had to be very careful about spending his money. Many people in my riding of Ottawa South are dependent on the CPP.

It's incumbent upon us to provide a vehicle—which the PRPPs are—for small and medium-sized employers to be able to provide some security for their employees, and to have it work complementarily to the ORPP, the Ontario registered pension plan. We as legislators have to look 10, 15, 20 years down the road, to see where people are going to be at. I want to go back to the federal government, again, not enhancing the CPP, which I do believe is a mistake, is an abdication of responsibility. In the absence, or the vacuum, of taking on that responsibility of ensuring that Ontarians—indeed all Canadians—have access to a good, solid retirement plan, or some security, we have to take these measures.

I'm fully supportive of this legislation, Bill 57, and PRPPs. As I said, they are a tool: They are a tool to work complementarily to the ORPP, to provide some retirement income security for those people who need it, to provide employers a vehicle by which they can support their employee and, again, work complementarily to the ORPP.

As I said, I hope that we can get this legislation moving forward. I'll cede my time to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Ottawa South for continuation of debate.

We'll move over to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I'm very pleased to be given the time this morning to support Bill 57, following my colleagues from Ottawa South and Scarborough Southwest.

There was a very important article written recently by Adam Mayers about the relationship between pensions and healthy communities. As most of you in the House know, as a former registered nurse, healthy communities are very important, not just to myself as a professional nurse, but also to every community here in Ontario.

The author clearly states that, "In the private sector, 76% of employees don't have a pension." In contrast, "In the public sector, 86% do." But the article is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. It looked at a study by the Boston Consulting Group. They were commissioned by four of Ontario's largest pension plans, looking at the relationship between pension plans and the health of the community. Now, there's a strong correlation, according to this article: that when you have a defined pension plan, the community is more healthy.

I'm going to share some of the data as part of my remarks this morning. According to Adam Mayers and the folks from Boston Consulting, "In 2012, Canadian defined benefit plans paid out \$72 billion to 3.5 million pensioners. Most of this money is spent where they live." Again, that's a good thing. They're not travelling all over the world; they're staying here in Ontario. I can't stress it enough. "In Ontario, 7% of all income in our towns and cities, or \$27 billion, is derived from defined benefit pensions." The article continues on to talk about how "Seniors with defined benefit plans are confident consumers because the predictable income stream allows them to better plan their" business.

0910

The article concludes by the following: "Make workplace pensions mandatory to force savings. The coming Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is an example," according to the author, of such a thing. Also, the author states, "Don't wait. Governments should do something now, whether enhancing the CPP or going another way." They also talk about sharing "the risk between the employees and employers, so that pensioners aren't left managing" their own affairs.

I heard, when we were debating Bill 57, the member from York-Simcoe speak eloquently in support of Bill 57.

I know my colleague earlier talked about the fact that the federal government is not working in partnership with Ontario, but I also wanted to say that we're not the first province to have PRPPs. Other provinces, like British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec, have all already passed legislation to have PRPPs. We're following other provinces.

An important message is that in the proposed legislation, in the explanatory note, it's clearly stated right at the beginning—it talks about how the purpose of this legislation is to provide a legal framework for the establishment of the administration of a type of pension plan that is accessible to both employees and those who are

self-employed. We note that this province has a lot of self-employed individuals, and they are mainly small businesses. As such, it is a good thing to have such a framework to support those individuals, to make sure they retire with a healthy, comfortable income.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation, if passed, will also set out rules for dealing with the funds of PRPP accounts for certain family law purposes, because often the family breaks down and a family will move across provinces. It's very important that we set out the rules to make sure everybody is aware at the time of the establishment of the plan.

The other piece about the proposed legislation is the fact that as a government we have been very clear to support seniors and their well-being as they retire. I have a very aging riding, Scarborough-Agincourt; a good proportion of my constituents are seniors.

More importantly, the fact is that the government, in their fall 2014 economic statement, confirmed our intention to introduce this legislation. And I believe most members of the House to date who have spoken on Bill 57 support the intent of this bill. I hope that we can have further dialogue as this bill gets discharged to a committee, to seek out more stakeholders to discuss this bill further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from the government side for their speeches on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, but I don't know who to thank. It's like speed debating over there. It's like, how many Liberals can actually speak in one 20-minute slot? It's like, they've got their legislation but they're not that sure about it, or they're not that proud of it. We're just trying to figure out what they want, because normally a member gets 20 minutes to speak on a piece of legislation. I know my colleague from Huron-Bruce is going to speak a little bit later, and I'll have the opportunity to help as well, fairly soon, to speak to this bill. But I'm just wondering what the MO of the Liberals is these days. It's like they're in and it's changing like it's musical debaters, just one after another?

Having said that, I'm going to have to say to them, you're going to have to pick a lane here. We're just after having debated and, through time allocation and the power of the tyranny of the majority, they pushed through, on second reading, Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan—You know, that one where it's going to cost up to 18,000 jobs here in the province of Ontario for every \$2 billion that it takes out of the economy; the one where there is simply no demonstrated need for it but it's a good political move on the part of the government because they're trying to pretend that somehow, if we pass Bill 56, everybody's going to retire in luxury here in the province of Ontario, when the reality is that it's up to everybody to plan. We've been doing that in Ontario through our RRSP system, the federal system, for many years.

The fact that people are not putting enough money into their RRSPs is directly related to the fact that they

don't have enough after you people over there have taken it all from them. And you're going to do more with your cap-and-tax.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from—*is it Renfrew—*

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nipissing–Pembroke.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Nipissing–Pembroke. He always adds a lively contribution to the debate, and I know we're all awake after listening to his comments.

But we know that the PRPP is not really the way to encourage people to save for a healthy retirement. We have RRSPs; there are those options out there. CPP is the right way; we need to enhance the CPP in order to actually effectively help people who are going to be in a retirement position to be able to afford the everyday costs of living: home, gas in their car, food in their belly.

So we agree with the Ontario retirement plan. That one is one that the NDP had proposed back in 2010, and we agree with that simply because there is buy-in both from the employer and the employee. That is what a retirement plan, really, in a fulsome way, should look like. It shouldn't be forced on an employee.

In this case, what's happening is that the employer goes out and purchases this program or product for retirement, and banks and insurance companies are going to charge an administration fee. That's not really going to help the employee. If the employee wants an RRSP, they can actually access that on an individual basis on their own. So I don't see how this is really going to help retirement at large for the citizens of Ontario, and I look forward to more debate. Maybe there's more information that will help us reconsider, but on the basis of this bill, I highly doubt that this is the answer to a retirement savings plan for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm glad to have an opportunity to add my voice to this, and my compliments to the members for Scarborough Southwest, Scarborough–Agincourt and Ottawa South for their comments earlier.

There is, I think, a general understanding of how important it is that we move forward with this legislation. As I think members know, there are five other provinces that have passed legislation to implement pooled retirement pension plans, those provinces being British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec. I think it's also important to understand that, obviously, this will be something that will be adding to what is already in place related to the federal plan.

We've been speaking also about our Ontario Retirement Pension Plan over the last year or so, very capably led by my colleague Minister Hunter and, of course, strongly supported by the Minister of Finance. This is all part of a package that we recognize is about dealing with the reality of the fact that people are not in the circumstances that I think they want to be in, in terms of looking forward to retirement.

If I may, in passing, with the little amount of time that I have left: I was very grateful that Minister Hunter, as part of her consultations over the winter break, was in Thunder Bay. It was interesting actually listening to all the people that came forward. I think you could accurately describe it as people from all sides of the political spectrum. Certainly social activists, who obviously lead the charge in regard to advancing social causes, and union leadership, as well as the chambers of commerce all agreed, actually, that we need to find some way to move forward to advance this issue. So this is a piece of legislation that is important, and we are certainly hopeful that all parties in the House will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

I just want to pick up on something that my good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke mentioned in his address. It's funny how this government operates the rules of debate. I've read the standing orders, but it's like they've cracked a code on how we can have as many people speak for the least amount of time, to be able to get a bill into committee. So I'd really like to have at least one of those members that spoke earlier talk about the government's plans to move this bill through committee and ultimately come back to the House for third reading. That's a request, through you, Speaker, to whoever is finishing the two minutes.

0920

I was in my riding last week, and I spoke at the Brockville Chamber of Commerce and had a great speech. I didn't get one question about Bill 57, but I had a lot of questions about the ORPP. In fact, I ended up quoting Liam McGuinty, the son of our former Premier who, at his deputation before the committee on the ORPP, representing the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, expressed some very valid concerns within the business community. I heard loud and clear, when I was in my riding, the opposition to the government's ORPP plan, the fact that there is so much misinformation out in the community about that. I hope that during debate today and in the days ahead, someone from the government will talk about their commitment to Bill 57, and really let businesses know exactly what their plans are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for final comments and questions.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On behalf of my other two Liberal members that spoke earlier, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I just want to comment on some of the remarks made here.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said that we have lots of members here and that we're splitting the time up. We have 58 members here, 58 that could speak to this bill. Do you want all 58 to get up? I don't know. We're sharing our time; we get three in one 20-minute time period and perhaps three in the next 20-

minute time period. When we get into 10-minute rotations then perhaps we can get more people standing up. That was also echoed by the member for Leeds–Grenville.

We've always brought bills to committee, and unlike the Conservative Party, there has always been debate on third reading—at least as far as I've been here there's been debate on third readings. I heard that was the case before, but I wasn't around to see that happen.

The member from London–Fanshawe mentioned also, similar to comments made earlier, about the RRSP or the Canada Pension Plan being better. Why would this be bad? I don't understand why this would be bad. It's quite clearly laid out. I think Bill 57 will encourage people—the money is pooled into a pension plan—to contribute. I think it's a good thing to do.

Basically, in some ways, I only save for the Canada Pension Plan, because that's the one that's automatically taken from me every single paycheck.

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines mentioned something very important: Five other provinces have already implemented this. We're not the first to do it, and we're not doing something that's silly. You have five provinces across Canada that have already done this. So I think it's a good thing to do. We should proceed with this.

I thank the members for their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I'm planning on using my entire 20 minutes because we feel that we need to have every opportunity presented to us to represent our constituents and to do the job we're meant to do.

What we're facing right now, I'm afraid—from the government side—is a version of speed debating that could replicate speed dating. It's a little bit ridiculous because saving for retirement is very, very important. Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, is an interesting proposal put forward by Minister Sousa. We need to take planning for our future very, very seriously, but we also have to trust that Ontarians can get it right. Because, Speaker, what I don't trust, at this stage of the game, is the Liberal government to get it right. I worry about that because so many times in this House we have seen acts come through first, second and third reading that tend to have a knee-jerk reaction to issues. I am afraid this is just a little bit of window dressing to cover up for other actions of this government that are detrimental to the future of our Ontario population. For instance, they want to talk about pooled registered pension plans, but how much money will Ontarians have to go into their pooled registered pension plans when, on the other hand, they are trying to hit the Liberal hand going into their pocket that is squeezing every last cent out where they can?

We had an eHealth premium introduced—the largest tax in Ontario's history—by this Liberal government. Where did that revenue go? It was to go to health care, but quietly it slipped into general revenue.

The fact of the matter is, just yesterday, we heard of another knee-jerk reaction and an example of the Liberal government wanting to jump on the bandwagon with regard to using people's sincere concern over climate change to introduce another opportunity to tax Ontarians. Their cap-and-trade proposition that has come forward in the announcement that we heard yesterday by the Premier and Minister Murray is nothing more than a tax. Unfortunately, there are very few pennies left in Ontario pockets these days. Here we have a government trying to reach in again and squeeze every single last cent out. It's not right.

It's interesting: When a government is \$300 billion in debt, I question how effectively they can manage a pooled registered pension plan. It's an interesting concept because I just feel—like they did yesterday—with the debt load that they're carrying and the enormous deficit, they're just looking for every possible revenue tool available, all at the expense of Ontario taxpayers.

I really admire my colleague and friend from York–Simcoe. She has given a lot of thought and a lot of time to this issue. She has done her homework. She has taken time to explain to us as a caucus what it means, in terms of the impacts of a pooled registered pension plan. I dare say that I'm worried that the government across the floor from me actually hasn't taken the time to do due diligence. I think that's a trend that we're seeing from this government.

Not only do we see speed debating happening on this floor; we're seeing speed legislation. So much is knee-jerk reaction. Have they done a cost-benefit analysis of the Ontario pooled registered pension plan that they're proposing? What is the bottom line? What would this mean for Ontario taxpayers and for people struggling to get by?

If they were really sincere about helping Ontarians, they would be making life a little bit easier in Ontario by way of addressing the exorbitant increases in energy. They would be addressing the issues that really matter. Instead, they're piling on more pressure after more pressure on the shoulders of people throughout this province. There's going to be a breaking point, and I worry about that. When we reach that breaking point, Ontario will not be in a position to have a lot of pooling happening because, just like our young people are quickly leaving this province, our seniors will be leaving the province as well and following their children to Alberta.

Mr. Mike Colle: Alberta? Give me a break.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's true. I have people in my constituency who have chosen to follow their children. Their children have good jobs in Alberta. Another family chose to relocate to Saskatchewan. People are moving west. They are looking for a break from the burden that this Ontario government has given. It's actually shameful.

I think it's shameful that there was heckling from across the floor, because it just shows how disconnected this government has become from the true population in this province. I cannot believe that somebody would

question—valuing family and valuing dollars and tired of having every last penny stripped out of their pocket—people's motives for moving closer to their family. I think that's very sad.

0930

When we talk about saving for our future, I can't help but think about another bill that this Liberal government tried to bring through: the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, where they were going to make small businesses, manufacturers and small farming operations pay out of their own pockets to collaborate so they can match an individual's contribution to a pension plan. These small businesses are suffering.

Again, they're just pulling straws. They're pulling from every different angle because they're so desperate for money, because they have a huge deficit. We're paying \$11 million in interest on a regular basis. It's just disgusting how they're going forward. I dare say that it's confusing for the average Ontarian, because on one hand they're talking about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, where a business would contribute to a pension and match what an individual pulls in, and now we're debating another bill, an act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans. This government is stretching, as I say, for revenue tools every which way they can, because the fact of the matter is, they just won't curb their wasteful spending. They are on a track that is going to take us right down the proverbial tube, and who's going to pay for it at the end of the day? It is indeed Ontarians. That's why so many are looking for an out.

Again, coming back to small business, I just want to take a moment and share a letter that I received from a constituent, a small business in my riding, Exeter Chrysler Ltd., to put perspective on how stressful it is at this stage of the game for business and people to make ends meet. The letter reads:

"I'm writing on behalf of Exeter Chrysler Ltd, a new car dealership in your riding that has been in business for 25 years. As a new car dealer, my dealership doesn't just sell and service vehicles. Our dealership creates well-paying jobs for 16 men and women in this local community.

"As an employer, I am very concerned about the new cost of doing business.... With a massive red tape burden, high electricity costs, the highest WSIB premiums in Canada, a pending carbon tax, and now an Ontario Registered Pension Plan" and possibly another framework for pooled registered pension plans as well, "these costs make for an increasingly difficult climate for job creation and economic growth."

It's interesting because the burden that this Liberal government is placing, according to this person's perspective, is estimated to take \$47 million per year from the auto sector.

Speaker, this individual is just one of hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario who are concerned with the government and its direction.

He closes by asking the government to provide clarity to the business community and the public around the

potential impacts that their decision-making and their legislation has. It's an interesting go.

We need to be very careful as we go forward. Again, I question that we are going down a path where we have a government that's nothing but knee-jerk activists, if you will, jumping on bandwagons, stretching wherever they can to generate revenue just to cover their backsides.

Again, when we look at, specifically, Bill 57, which deals with pooled registered pension plans, we have to take a look at the people who are interested in this. But I think the manner in which it has been presented, in conjunction with the other legislation that has been debated as well—people across Ontario are finding it very confusing. It's very important, just in carrying over from my colleague from York-Simcoe's comments last week, that we have to review exactly what we're talking about.

With regard to this particular pension plan, what does it mean to be pooled? Again, there is so much confusion out there in the small business world, amongst Ontarians, amongst even legislators, with regard to where this government is going. So let's talk about this particular act.

What does it mean to be pooled? What does it mean to be registered? Obviously, other pension plans are registered, so that's not quite as potentially unknown as the pooled part. But this is a legislative initiative that comes from the leadership of the federal government in being able to provide people with a savings instrument that could take them anywhere across the country. Again, I come back to the fact that there was actually a member from the Liberal government heckling the fact that I said seniors and parents are following their children to other provinces because they are tired of what is happening in Ontario. Meanwhile, this very piece of legislation that we're debating today allows them to move their savings easier.

Again, I come back to this: How well does the Liberal caucus actually know what's going on in Ontario, and within their own legislation as well? Again, I question, if they don't know what's going on and they don't understand how their impacts are causing Ontarians to make very big decisions in moving out of this province—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Or they don't care.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Actually, maybe that's it. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex just said maybe it's not a matter of understanding; maybe it's a matter that they just don't care what their direction over the last 10 years has given Ontarians, which is no choice but to "get out of Dodge," meaning get out of Ontario.

But let's go back to this particular act. This particular act enables people, if they are tired of what's happening under this Liberal government, to get out of Ontario and take their savings with them. So the umbrella legislation has been passed federally about two years ago, and because of that, other various provinces have picked up the opportunity that it represents and provided their constituents with companion legislation that would then allow the notion of the pool.

In 2013, the member from York-Simcoe introduced her own private member's bill, which the government

picked up in its 2013 spring budget. Of course, I sat here with the member from York-Simcoe, and I can say, on behalf of the entire PC caucus, that we were naturally very happy that they picked it up. Because of the general confusion around pensions and pension plans—and people from all walks of life have commented on the problem of financial literacy—in terms of this particular concept, we have to utilize an opportunity around pooled pensions to grow financial literacy as well. That begs the point: Just like we need agricultural and agri-food literacy in our classrooms, we'd be remiss if we didn't take time to say how important our financial literacy is as well. I would encourage this Liberal government to take a look at how they're encouraging our education system to prepare our students in that regard.

Coming back to saving for the future, the pooled registered pension plan is a tool, as I said, that the federal government has provided. Finally, in Ontario, we are now making an opportunity available to residents of Ontario to become part of that pension plan that is pooled. One of the things we know about pension plans is that they need lots of members. If a pooled pension plan is going to work, they need lots of members. If you're going to be able to act in the best interests of pensioners, then you have to have enough money to be able to go out and make good investments.

But again, can we trust this government to get it right? Time and time again, they've squandered dollars on scandals and mismanagement. I worry about it, but we have to hold out hope, because in terms of making good investments, it's much easier, obviously, when you have a large number of participants. That's the notion, actually, behind the pool: that it goes into exactly a pool, and from there, decisions are made that provide interest on the money that's being collected and therefore the availability to go out and make investments on behalf of the pensioners.

0940

We need a good return, for goodness' sake. I can tell you that seniors on fixed incomes do indeed need a good return in terms of their pensions, because their line of living, if you will, has been planned for some time. I worry because this Liberal government, every which angle you look at it, is causing life to become more and more expensive as every day goes by. Just yesterday we heard about a cap-and-trade initiative that's going to drive the cost of everything through the roof, from groceries to heating your homes to the gas you put in your car. While seniors have tried to plan and they have a ceiling in terms of what their monthly expenses should be in terms of maintaining a certain quality of life—guess what?—the Liberal government, based on their announcement yesterday, is busting right through that ceiling, and they're really causing a lot of stress, not only on seniors trying to stretch their dollars as best they can but on all Ontarians. It is such a worry.

Going back to savings: Another thing that we hear often, particularly about RRSPs and the space left in them, is that people don't put the full amount in. That tells me that they don't have a lot of money left over because, as I

said, the Liberals are making the cost of living in this province skyrocket because they're so desperate to generate new revenue tools to cover their backsides.

When you take everything into account and when you look at a pooled investment system, individuals have their accounts in a pooled plan for investment purposes, and that means that you have low costs and better investment. Hopefully that allows seniors and people planning for their retirement to have a little bit of wiggle room. There's general interest in the pooled retirement registered pension plans, and we should look at some of the interest that others have taken in this.

The first one that I'd like to use is the Portfolio Management Association of Canada. They have written to the government in support of this particular initiative, and they've also written to the government opposing the Ontario registered pension plan. That goes back to my point earlier. We have two different initiatives that are conflicting, and even the marketplace is recognizing that this Ontario Liberal government can't get it right.

We have to understand and take what the Portfolio Management Association of Canada is saying to heart because there is probably no other group that understands the value of registered pension plans and the dangers of a specific, dedicated Ontario pension plan.

There is an excerpt from a letter to Minister Hunter from this association:

"We are pleased that Ontario has recognized the advantages of a PRPP program and has moved forward with PRPP legislation. PRPPs provide the opportunity to participate in a simple and straightforward pension plan."

With that, I will conclude my comments in support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased, of course, to stand in this Legislature and speak about retirement security and make comments in response to the member from Huron-Bruce.

As we're talking about Bill 57, the pooled registered pension plan—I always find it a challenge to say "pension plan" when, really, it's a profit plan. It is a glorified RRSP. It is part of the pooled investment system, granted, and it certainly has its place in that, but it isn't a pension per se.

As the member said, we're asking: What does it mean to be pooled? What does it mean to be registered? But I'd like to talk about what it actually means to be a pension. To my way of thinking, a pension has contributions both from the employee and the employer, and these PRPPs don't oblige the employer to put in.

Interestingly, we'd heard the member talk about how pooled plans need more members in the plan, and these PRPPs, if an employer chooses—and the choice is at the employer level—to have these plans for their employees, the employees don't have a choice whether or not to buy in. The choice is made for them. So certainly there will be more people in the plan but not more money, because, again, without that employer contribution, how large can this grow? Not nearly as large as it could have if both were contributing, as it would be with a pension.

Another thing is, the member said that we're getting to a breaking point. While I agree that, as she said, the Liberals are causing the cost of living to skyrocket, we are already at a breaking point. Those two thirds of Ontarians who don't have a workplace pension—this is not that workplace pension. This is a supplement. This is not a pension.

Thank you very much, that's my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to provide a few comments. I listened carefully to the member from Huron–Bruce and the member from Oshawa.

Let me say that what the government is doing here is providing just another opportunity for employers and employees to get into allowing their pension money to generate more income into their plan. Yes, it's a little bit better than an RRSP, because in an RRSP you are the individual who has to make the decision where the money is invested and you determine your own return on investment. But in a pooled plan, you pool the money from everybody and you would have an administrator who will give you some advice that will help you to do better, and that's the whole intent of it.

The reason the government is proceeding this way is the federal government allowed this to employers in the federal sector back in 2012. Ontario sees an opportunity here to provide it for employers in Ontario, and we're following along with other provinces.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to correct one comment made by the member from Oshawa. In the plan, where an employer elects to offer a PRPP, enrolment of employees would be automatic, subject to the ability to opt out within 60 days. So employees do have the option. If they don't like the plan their employer is offering them, they can opt out after the automatic sign-in. That's a little correction; I think the member from Oshawa is slightly off course.

But I would say to you there is no benefit in what the government is bringing here directly to the government, as was mentioned by the speaker. This is strictly to provide an opportunity for the public to have another tool at their disposal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a pleasure to add some comments to the debate today, following my colleague the MPP from Huron–Bruce, who I think summed this piece of legislation up best, but most importantly discussed some of the other issues facing the province of Ontario, some of the initiatives this government is taking that are further taking Ontario down the wrong path.

This morning, for myself, it's great to rise and speak for a couple of minutes on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, and to follow up what my colleague from Huron–Bruce said. This government continues to tax and spend. It is the legacy of, first, Premier McGuinty, and now the current Liberal government.

I want to talk a bit about the ORPP, another pension initiative that the Liberals are undertaking. A lot of people in Ontario I don't think realize that under the ORPP initiative, if you make \$45,000 per year you are going to essentially have to cut a cheque to Premier Wynne and the Liberals for almost \$800, and the employer also has to match that contribution. So that's \$1,600 out of the economy for every employee in Ontario making \$45,000 per year.

I had the privilege of talking to Professor Lee from Ottawa at finance committee, who said that with the ORPP, anyone 40 years or older in Ontario is not going to receive the full benefit of the ORPP. Essentially, they're going to pool billions and billions and billions of dollars to spend as they see fit.

0950

As the member from Huron–Bruce said, it really is another tax in Ontario. In the meantime, it's also going to cost about 150,000 private sector jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to stand up to make a few comments to the member from Huron–Bruce on her debate time.

She mentioned that folks are at their breaking point. This really is going to do nothing to fix that. If a person has precarious work, if they're already working in a low-income job, this is going to do absolutely nothing except take more money out of their pocket. If there is an opt-out portion to this, I'm sure they would be doing that because they need the money in their pocket to pay for child care that's not affordable in this province. They need it for hydro that's going through the roof in this province. They need it for transit, for transportation, for insurance for their vehicle to be able to go back and forth.

If the members from the government really want to do something for the people of this province, maybe work on child care; maybe bring our hydro rates down so people can afford it. I don't think—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened very closely when the people on the other side of the House spoke, and I would appreciate the same respect back.

This isn't a pension plan. This is, as my seatmate here said, a glorified profit plan for the banks, for the insurance companies. They're the ones who are going to profit from this at the end of the day. People who want to participate in RRSPs are already doing that.

This isn't going to save the breaking point for families in this province who are at their breaking point because, like I said, it's hydro rates, it's auto insurance, it's childcare. It's the cost of a loaf of bread and a bag of milk in this province these days.

I think they need to switch their focus, keep moving forward with the ORPP. I know it's not going to save the day for people tomorrow, but at least it will do something for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the original debater, the member from Huron–Bruce, for final comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly want to express my appreciation to the members from Oshawa, Scarborough–Rouge River, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Hamilton Mountain, because it's important that everybody has an opportunity to share their perspective on Bill 57.

I have to share with you that if Ontario passes the PRPP legislation, almost 90% of all Canadians will have access to PRPPs. This will likely lower the administration costs of pooled registered plans, increase the potential purchasing power of the plans and reduce barriers of interprovincial movement and trade.

As I said, this Liberal government has made living in Ontario very difficult, and with yesterday's announcement, the cost of living in this province will continue to go through the roof. People need options. If they want to follow their family members to Alberta or Saskatchewan, this pooled pension plan enables that mobility, if you will. We need PRPPs, not an ORPP.

This government has confused the constituents throughout this province to no end. I don't know whether they've purposely tried to do that, but I can tell you, people get it. I go back to my constituent from Exeter Chrysler Ltd. He gets it, as so many others do. This government has laden Ontarians with massive red tape, high electricity costs, the highest WSIB premiums in Canada and a pending carbon tax, and now we have to try to hold this government to account.

We stand here today saying for once, maybe, they're getting it. They're seeing that a lot of people are moving out of this province because they can't afford to live here any longer. This legislation allows them to take their pension plans with them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to discuss issues that are near and dear to them and impact their everyday lives. Pension plans are one such issue. Whether you are drawing from a pension plan, contributing to a plan or longing for a plan to be offered by your employer, Ontarians are thinking about their pensions and retirement.

I think it's important to discuss the right pension framework for Ontario. The bill before us today, Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, is the wrong plan.

In Ontario, we are facing a retirement security crisis. As my honourable colleague and NDP pension critic, the member from Oshawa, stated, two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension plan and personal savings are not enough to fill the gap. Pooled retirement pension plans are not sufficient to make up for this and fix the retirement security crisis in this province.

I think outlining some of the reasons why there is a retirement security crisis in Ontario will help us understand

which pension legislation we need to be moving forward. From there, I hope to outline why the legislative regime outlined in Bill 57 is insufficient in dealing with this.

To expand on this point, the cost of living in this province is skyrocketing. The cost to make ends meet in Ontario, to raise your children, and to put gas in the family Chrysler Town and Country minivan are all on the rise. Looking simply at increases in hydro rates in this province will help us understand these rising costs and the impact this has on Ontario families.

According to the Ontario Energy Board, rates have gone from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2002, to 14 cents per kilowatt hour today. I should point out that this tripling of rates happened over successive periods of Liberal and Conservative governments, both of which were involved in the process of the privatization of our hydro system.

Windsor West is not immune to these increases. One constituent wrote to me in January, in the dead of winter—and believe it or not, we do get winter in the deep south of Ontario—and declared that the rates he was paying were unaffordable. To quote this person directly, the email stated, "These increases [are] absurd. Middle class [Ontarians] can't afford this. These rates need to lower as soon as possible."

"As soon as possible," says my constituent, yet this government only offers more privatization in this area.

The other point I want to expand on is that two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension plan. Explaining this requires some nuance. In Windsor and the rest of southwestern Ontario, a major issue we are grappling with is the loss of our manufacturing footprint in the rest of North America.

In Windsor specifically, we can see this in the automotive sector. These manufacturing jobs usually come with workplace pension plans. Ideally, these would be defined benefit plans. Simply put, in these plans the beneficiaries can expect a certain level of income in their retirement because it is based on their salaries and years of service. Their retirement benefit is defined.

Unfortunately, labour trends in Ontario are shifting. Statistics Canada reported last week that manufacturing, as a total share of employment in Canada, fell to just over 9% in March. We saw this story published in reports all over the weekend. It speaks to the importance of these industries to Canadians. These industries are vital to the economy of southwestern Ontario.

Statistics Canada also released the latest job numbers last week. Again, Windsor's jobless rate was among the highest in the country at 11.1% unemployment. This is a staggering increase from the already high February figure of 9.6%.

The Windsor Star reported that, a large part of this drastic increase was because of the 4,500 Windsor Assembly Plant employees currently laid off. Now, these layoffs are only temporary while Fiat Chrysler retools their plant, but these figures underscore how important the automotive industry is to Windsor.

I'm glad that investments are being made in our assembly plant, and I know this will help sustain other

industries in my community, like the very successful tooling industry. What I want, and what people across southwestern Ontario want, is to see jobs in automotive and parts manufacturing available to the next generation of workers. We want our children to have the same options we did and benefit from the excellent quality of life that working in an auto plant or a tooling shop offers.

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Ontario needs to not only keep its current automotive plants in operation, but needs to attract investment and expand its automotive footprint throughout North America. To do this, my New Democrat colleagues and I have continually called for a comprehensive automotive strategy. This can include incentives for investment, research and development, and coordinating intergovernmental involvement in the automotive industry. We need this government to work with industry and those employed in the sector, to bring automotive investment to southwestern Ontario.

Strategizing around industries that have a history of providing workplace pensions to hard-working Ontarians is one way to help bring about a level retirement security in this province, but of course it's not the only way. We need a strong public sector pension plan.

With the decline in manufacturing jobs, we are seeing more working Canadians employed in service sector jobs than ever before. Statistics Canada reports that in March, the share of Canadians working in service industries climbed above 78%.

Many of my constituents are employed in the service sector and perform jobs in areas like retail and food service. These people work hard, but are often not compensated nearly as well as those employed in manufacturing. A disappointing characteristic of many service jobs is that they do not come with an employee pension plan. We need real action to help Ontarians plan for their retirement and retire comfortably.

The Canada Pension Plan has been praised several times on both sides of this chamber and is the Canadian benchmark for a strong retirement framework. This plan is universal, portable and directly benefits retirees. It also offers extremely low investment fees.

I think many Canadians were disappointed, although perhaps not surprised, but disappointed nevertheless, when the federal government decided, in 2013, not to enhance the Canada Pension Plan.

Instead, the Conservative government opted for a pooled retirement pension plan model. A pooled retirement pension plan is essentially an expensive pooled savings mechanism that is structured a bit like a Registered Retirement Savings Plan. One of the main problems with these private sector plans is that they charge outrageous management fees, compared to plans like CPP. For example, Canadians pay 2% or more for administration of their RRSPs, whereas the large public pensions, such as CPP, pay well less than 1% for fund administration. Fees erode returns for Ontarians and everyone across Canada. The most beneficial plans will have the lowest fees. It's unlikely to find low fees in a pension plan that's geared

towards profiting the administrator rather than solely benefiting its contributors.

The bill before us today attempts to establish and provide for the administration of PRPPs in Ontario. It draws from and largely adopts 2012 federal legislation. If passed, the bill would extend the regulatory authority over PRPPs to the Ontario Superintendent of Financial Services and set out the process for a PRPP administrator to rule on the decisions of the superintendent.

The bill would also include PRPPs in the definition of a pension plan and add PRPPs to the list of vehicles to which a plan can permit a former member or eligible spouse to transfer plan assets.

This bill, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, is flawed by design.

PRPPs do not require employers to contribute to an employee's plan. Generally, this means there is less in the pool, and we can conceive that this would likely lead to reduced returns. These returns, as I've stated before, are subjected to much higher fees than we see in more traditional public plans, like the CPP.

A few points to add here: PRPPs are market-based and cannot offer the predictability that many Ontarians entering retirement require, so that they can plan ahead of time for their retirement. Moreover, employers can offer their employees enrolment into a PRPP but do not have to contribute anything themselves. This is a direct contrast to the employer/employee contribution model we see in the CPP and, most recently, in the Ontario pension plan.

Bill 57 sets up the structure to allow for PRPPs. This Liberal government touted the creation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan as the progressive way forward, only to slot the creation of pooled retirement plans next on the order paper. This government is playing a shell game with our retirement.

I spoke on Bill 56 and asked for details. Instead, I get the government focusing on a pooled retirement regime when they should be focused on setting up the ORPP. We're concerned that, rather than allowing for the ORPP to take effect and then looking into some supplemental saving options, if they have such a desire to do so, this government has decided to simultaneously introduce the framework for profit-making pooled plans. Yes, on the same day that the Liberals tabled a bill setting out a framework for an Ontario pension plan that includes both employee and employer contributions, they also tabled a bill allowing the sale of pooled, for-profit plans.

Will PRPPs be considered comparable to the ORPP, thus making those enrolled in PRPPs exempt from contributing to the ORPP? This is the question our NDP pension critic has tried to have answered several times, but this government will not provide a clear and comprehensive answer. This question is an important one, and I hope in the coming weeks, the government provides us with a definitive answer.

The clear winners in PRPPs are the large banks and insurance industries. PRPPs are a financial product, not a pension plan. As a product, those administering PRPPs

receive a share in their performance. As I stated before, the administrator of the plan erodes the return for the beneficiary through excessive fees. Also, as I've said before, employers are not obligated to contribute to their employees' PRPPs. Despite Bill 57 trying to expand the definition of a pension to include PRPPs, these pooled plans are financial products, not pensions.

I want to clarify with my remarks here. I do not wish to be seen as arguing that financial products do not have a role to play in our retirement savings. Certainly, many families across Ontario contribute to a Registered Retirement Savings Plan or a tax-free savings account or employ other mechanisms to help save for their retirement. What I'm saying is that the financial products must be viewed as additional saving tools and not foundational mechanisms for retirement planning. Purchasing these products can be a way to augment your pension plan, but they cannot become your pension plan.

I'm aware of my time, Speaker, and I'm glad I had a chance to voice my opposition to this bill. At a time when we need to unpack the crucial details of the Ontario pension plan and have a discussion on how to foster growth in industries that provide good jobs to Ontarians, complete with competitive pension plans, this government is appeasing its friends in the financial sector.

Describe a PRPP as you will, it is not a pension plan. A pension provides security in retirement and sees both employer and employee make contributions. A pension is the vehicle of your retirement: a way for you to travel, pay for your hobbies and spoil your grandchildren. A pension is foundational for hard-working, middle-class Ontarians. A PRPP is not a pension at all.

With the little amount of time I have left, I'd just like to go back over some of the points that I made. I spoke at some length about the automotive sector and the importance of the automotive sector—the manufacturing sector, frankly—to Windsor and Essex county, but it's important across the province as well. I think an important thing to address is the pension security of people who work in all sectors who have a pension plan offered through their workplace. They put in many, many years in order to reap the benefits of that pension. We're seeing more and more across the province that those pensions are not secure. We have companies that declare bankruptcy or they close up shop and move on across the border to the States or to Mexico, and they leave the employees who dedicated 20 or 30 years of their life to the company without retirement security, without a pension.

I think that when we're looking at pension plans for the broader public, we need to make sure that they're secure plans. When we're looking at the PRPPs, I think the key here is the excessive fees that will be charged to those who contribute to them. Therefore, their return may not be exactly what they need in order to be able to live comfortably in retirement.

We see the cost of living going up, as my constituent—and this is not the only constituent who has written my office or phoned my office to speak to me about the cost of hydro. People across the province are having a

very difficult time paying their hydro bill. They're deciding between whether they're going to eat or whether they're going to keep the lights on. I think that we need to make sure that when people do have the opportunity to put money away into retirement, into a pension plan, that pension plan needs to be fairly secure; they're not looking at losing a good portion of what they've struggled to put into it; they're not losing that to these excessive fees; we're not having people on Bay Street or those in the insurance industry getting rich off of them and them having a secure retirement at the expense of those who struggle to pay into these.

1010

I had also talked about being able to enjoy family time in retirement. I think that's something else we need to be sure of. Again, a lot of these people who would be contributing are in lower-income, minimum wage jobs. This has to be something where they know their money is secure when they do manage to put it in and that in the future—should they have grandchildren, should they want to retire and travel with their loved ones and their family members—that money is secure and it's there for them to be able to do that.

We need to make sure that people have the opportunity to opt out. I know a member from the government side had mentioned there is the opportunity to opt out, but I think we see—when you see the commercials on TV, “Phone now and order this,” people think it's a great idea. They call in, they order it and they don't necessarily see the fine print that says, “You are now going to be on an auto-ship program,” where they're going to ship out every month and they're going to bill you every month.

We need to be very careful with a plan such as this, although I think it was mentioned that there are 60 days and then they have an opt-out period. There are 60 days when they don't have the opportunity to opt out. I'm curious to know if for the 60 days they paid into it, they are able to get that money back, should they decide to opt out.

I also think that people lead very busy lives and they—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yes. They're at work, they've got family to take care of, they're worried about paying their bills, whether they can afford to keep the lights on, and sometimes deadlines pass—they miss the deadline to cancel whatever it was they ordered. I'm afraid this plan is setting them up for that same type of situation, where we could see five or six months or a year pass and they're paying into something that they don't necessarily want to be paying into. We need to make sure that it's clear to people where their money is going. We need to make sure that everybody understands what this PRPP is and what their rights and obligations are. We need to make sure that they know they have the opportunity to opt out.

But ultimately, we would rather not see this bill pass. We think there are definitely better options available than a PRPP. I certainly wouldn't want to work my whole life and put into a plan, only to find out when I retire that

there's less in the plan than what I had been paying into it all those years. We need to make sure that whatever avenue people use to invest their money to save for retirement, that money is secure at the end.

I understand that even with RRSPs there is some uncertainty as to whether or not you are going to gain some on your investment or whether you're going to lose a little bit on your investment. There's always some uncertainty there, but I think that an item such as the PRPP sets people up for even a greater loss in their investment. That's something we certainly cannot afford in this province, as I mentioned, with the cost of living going up. We look at the hydro rates and grocery rates; gas rates have gone up. We certainly want to make sure that when someone is in their senior years, when they have worked their entire life and they're looking to retire, they have the income and the stability to be able to live not only in comfort, but to be able to enjoy what they have worked their whole life to do.

I think I'm just about out of time, Speaker, so I'll wrap it up for now. I look forward to further debate, when my colleague from Nickel Belt might have an opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to thank the member from Windsor West. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments at a later time when this bill is debated.

I'd like to thank all members in the House this morning for their contribution to the debate on Bill 57.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now almost 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight to welcome again a frequent visitor, Susan Gapka from the Trans Lobby Group.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to welcome Susan Walmer, executive director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, to the House today. She's a resident of the great riding of Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome my good friend Mark Kunkel from Powassan. He's here with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm delighted to welcome a student from Saint-Michel school in my riding, from Kingsville: Chloe Mastronardi, who is serving as a page here with us.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd like to welcome Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; he'll be with us today. Later today there's a reception down in the dining room, and I encourage all members to attend.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome Gerald Smith, president of the Ontario-Michel Association—they're not in yet, but they're in to see people from Queen's Park today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to steal somebody's thunder and welcome Linda Jeffrey, the mayor of Brampton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got a check mark here; I'd like to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh for stepping on my normal procedures.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome a couple of guests from the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. They're in the east members' gallery: Lee-Ann Kant and Yvonne Wyndham, who is a constituent of the great riding of Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On behalf of our colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I'd like to welcome the mother of our page Samantha Lin. Her mother is Teresa Ma. She will be in the public gallery watching question period this morning.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Dr. Stephen Abrams from the ODA, the Ontario Dental Association, will be joining us shortly. He is a Londoner, and I used to work for his mom and dad at the market in London.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome a good friend of many of us here, Susan Gapka. Susan is part of the Trans Lobby Group. Susan had a great opportunity of us going running together in my riding of Ottawa Centre. She's a great runner. Welcome to Queen's Park, Susan.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome here today, from my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, a member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Peggy Brekveld, who will be in the lobby here very shortly.

As well, Dr. Jerry Smith, a friend of mine from Thunder Bay, is here on behalf of the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome Jack and Ann Murphy. They came here all the way from St. Marys, Ontario. Welcome, Ann and Jack Murphy.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to introduce the father of page captain Ryan Arff from Ajax-Pickering, who just happens to be standing beside me. His father, Dietmar Arff, will be in the public gallery this morning, and I'd certainly like to welcome him.

At the same time, on behalf of MPP Amrit Mangat from Mississauga-Brampton South, I'd like to introduce Cindy Atkinson, the mother of page captain Thomas Atkinson. Mrs. Atkinson will be here in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I, too, would like to welcome Mayor Jeffrey. She's here accompanying the Probus Club of Brampton. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, OSLA, here with us today. They're in the public gallery. We're joined by Peggy Allen, the president; executive members Lorie Grant and Pam Millett; and executive director Mary Cook. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It is a great pleasure for me, as the MPP for Richmond Hill and also as an honorary dentist without the right to practise, to welcome members of the Ontario Dental Association to Queen's Park; spe-

cifically, two dentists from my riding of Richmond Hill: Dr. Elise Wong and Dr. C.P. Giri.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Somewhat anticlimactic: We have the member from Brampton Centre in the 38th, Brampton–Springdale in the 39th and 40th and present mayor of Brampton in the east public gallery: Linda Jeffrey. Welcome home. Welcome back.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask that all members join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 41st Parliament. Would they please assemble to be introduced?

Ryan Arff from Ajax–Pickering; Thomas Atkinson from Mississauga–Brampton South; Colin Bryan from Don Valley West; Megan Chan from Oak Ridges–Markham; Olivia Collver from Haldimand–Norfolk; Ashton Corr from Niagara Falls; Misha Davies Gedalof from Davenport; Mira Gillis from Windsor–Tecumseh; Jae Min Han from Markham–Unionville; Abdullah Hasan from Scarborough–Rouge River; Afiyah Islam from Beaches–East York; Samantha Lin from Carleton–Mississippi Mills; Chloe Mastronardi from Essex; Ethan McCready–Branch from Kitchener Centre; Joshua Osborne from Newmarket–Aurora; Cailyn Perry from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Luca Riccio–Durocher from Chatham–Kent–Essex; Joshua Rosenberg from York Centre; Madison Rynard from Simcoe North; Ishika Tiwari from Scarborough–Guildwood; Colton Tompkins from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; and Carina Watson from Halton. These are our pages for this session.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I'm fond of saying, get back to work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to start question period before the heckling starts.

It is now time for question period.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Acting Premier. Because of your cap-and-tax plan, you claim the cost of gas will go up three cents a litre. Well, your record says differently. We cannot trust your numbers. Minister Chiarelli once said that the rising cost of hydro was worth about a cup of coffee. However, Ontarians across this province have seen their hydro bills nearly triple under your watch. You said the cost of the gas plant scandal would be \$40 million and it ballooned to over \$1 billion.

Acting Premier, how much will gas increase under the Liberal cap-and-tax scheme?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I'm disappointed in the opposition party. They have chosen a

side. They are opposing cap and trade. They are opposing taking action on greenhouse gas. But at least I respect them for having a position on cap and trade. They've made a big mistake on this, but they've made a decision to not support this.

The third party, I think to everyone's astonishment, has actually chosen not to take a position. There are two sides to this debate. One side says, "Let's take action; we must take action," and the other side says—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

A one-sentence wrap-up, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I respect the PC Party. They have chosen a path, the wrong path, but at least they have chosen a path.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I dare say we're the only party in this House that is standing up for Ontarians across this province.

Back to the Acting Premier: Your carbon tax will increase the cost of everything. You're feeding your spending addiction from the pocketbooks of hard-working Ontarians. Because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I expect the same when a question is put, as much as an answer.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Because of high energy prices in Ontario, I often hear from people who have had to choose food over heating. You force them to pick, Acting Premier, between heating and eating. That's not the Ontario that I'm proud to say I'm a member of. You're driving people out of this province. Your cap-and-tax scheme will just continue to open the door and usher people and business out of this province. What will Ontarians have to sacrifice next—their home, maybe new shoes for their children, school trips for their children? Deputy Premier, what do you say to them? What will Ontarians have to sacrifice next?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The big flaw in the PC or maybe—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —party is that they don't recognize that there are costs attached to inaction. We are already paying the price. We're seeing increased insurance costs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today, Premiers from right across this country are joining together in the fight against climate change. These Premiers represent all parties.

The world is moving on. We recognize that there is a problem that is having and will continue to have a devastating impact on our farmers, on our health, on our plants, on our animals and on our ecosystem. We must take

action. The time to take action is now, and there is a cost to inaction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The cost to all of the Liberal action over this past decade has added up to \$23,000 on every set of shoulders in this province. It's absolutely shameful.

Again, back to the Acting Premier: Because across the globe we're seeing cap-and-tax systems riddled with scandal, fraud and corruption, it's only natural for your Liberal government to jump right on that bandwagon. I have to tell you, Acting Premier, that while we support reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we will not support this being done through another irresponsible tax. You're making it harder for the average Ontarian, and the only winners in this scenario are going to be your Liberal friends. It may be easy for you to pick winners and losers, but why should the average Ontarian pick between their kids playing hockey or heating their home, as opposed to having to pay their bills? When are you going to stand up for Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's becoming clear that the pro-carbon party is the best friend carbon ever had.

Speaker, what you must recognize and what we all must recognize is that we believe in the principle that the polluter should pay. We know that when we add a cost to carbon, businesses will reduce their emissions because it makes sense for them to do it. Why would we not reward businesses that take action to reduce emissions? That is at the heart of this.

Across the country, there is momentum building—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will come to order. The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Several members of the PC Party have actually voted in favour of taking immediate action. That is what we were doing. But it appears to me that what's happening now is the climate change deniers have taken control of the PC caucus. They are the ones who are driving this change.

I know there are people on your side who think this is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said, "Call it carbon pricing, cap and trade, a market mechanism ... if you must, go

ahead and call it a tax." I'm glad we agree on something: It is a tax. It's a tax on everything.

In Australia, we know it costs families \$550 every year. Deputy Premier, how much money will your tax cost Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think the question is, what does inaction cost Ontario families? We are already paying the price. We're paying now billions of dollars for the impacts of climate change, and that will accelerate; that will only grow.

Families are paying now. Ask the people of Burlington if climate change is impacting their cost of living. Ask the people who were affected by the ice storm if climate change is affecting their cost of living. We are paying the price now; we will pay the price more in the future. The time to take action is now.

The approach on cap and trade is the right way to go. I just wish the PCs would actually join the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is about money and you know it. It's about money.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member can look away all he wants, but the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will come to order—second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Deputy Premier: Last night on CBC, your economic development minister, the man responsible for growing the economy, admitted that your carbon tax will take money out companies' hands and put it into government coffers. He said that it would take money out of our economy. That will mean fewer jobs. That will be the legacy of your carbon tax.

Deputy Premier, how many jobs will be lost under your new carbon tax?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, once again, the question is, how many jobs will be created? We are actually creating jobs, the next generation of jobs.

When the Premier and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change made their announcement yesterday, they made it at a plant that produces programmable thermostats. That is a product that is now in demand globally. It is in demand because people are trying to make wiser use of their expenditures. When people save on their energy consumption, they will save money.

We will reinvest the money in a very transparent way in a range of projects that will help families be more energy-efficient, that will build up public transit to reduce congestion, that will help factories and businesses reduce their pollution. This is an economic generator.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: My final supplementary back to the Deputy Premier: Yesterday, the Premier brought up the fact that she wanted to be able to tell her granddaughter what she did as Premier. She wanted to be able to say that she didn't have her head in the sand. That's funny, because this government has had their head in the sand for the last 12 years.

Your policies have driven jobs out of this province and have allowed our energy rates to skyrocket.

Deputy Premier, is your government okay with telling our grandchildren that they'll have no job and they will owe \$23,000 in debt?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, they don't have to take it from me. Let's hear what Michael McSweeney, president and CEO, Cement Association of Canada, has to say. He says, "There are good reasons—environmental and economic—to tackle greenhouse gas emissions now, and with some sense of urgency.... We believe Ontario is on the right track, with its plan to introduce a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas...."

David Paterson, corporate and environmental affairs, General Motors Canada: "GM believes there can be opportunities in addressing climate change and that we need to go on with that and do it."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's just about it. Every sentence.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ken Neumann of the Steelworkers says, "There is a pressing need to address climate change. And if the revenues from carbon pricing are reinvested in Ontario's economy, we can create a lot of jobs and build things we want and need, like more transit, more renewable energy, and more energy-efficient industry."

Speaker, there are many people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. For over a decade, the Liberals have been opposed to privatizing Hydro One. My question is, can the Deputy Premier tell us what has changed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We in this province have a very clear and tangible need to invest in infrastructure. I think many people came in today and experienced that need themselves this morning. We must invest in infrastructure. Our people are depending on us to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We need to pay for it, and we will maximize our assets so we can build new assets, like better infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the Deputy Premier remembers 2003. It was when she and her Premier were first elected. Their leader, Dalton McGuinty, at that time said, "Ontario families want affordable, reliable electricity. They know that the sale of the grid that carries electricity to their homes is a disaster for consumers."

Can the Deputy Premier tell us whether she and the Premier believed in that plan back in 2003 when they ran under it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think a lot of people are disappointed that the NDP has become the party of the status quo. They don't want to change; they don't want to build for tomorrow's economy. They are rooted in the past. I have to say that they have opposed changes to the LCBO, opposed changes to the Beer Store, opposed changes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When they oppose any ways to fund transit, they are opposing infrastructure investment. You cannot have it both ways; if you want to build it, you have to pay for it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier first won her seat with a team that opposed the sell-off of Hydro One. Dalton McGuinty said this about Hydro One: "These people have never had their say on this, not in an election, not even in public hearings." Now this Liberal Premier, this Liberal government, is planning a sale of Hydro One without running in an obvious way on that plan, without any hearings whatsoever with the people of Ontario, without ever explaining to people what it means or how much it will cost Ontarians on their hydro bills.

My question is, will the Deputy Premier tell Ontarians exactly who is behind the Liberals' 180-degree about-face on this file?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The people of Ontario are looking for the government to take leadership when it comes to building infrastructure. No matter what part of the province you go to, whether it's small communities or large communities, we hear over and over again that the infrastructure we have is not adequate. Our infrastructure deficit is reducing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our infrastructure deficit is reducing the ability of companies to create jobs. We must act. We're acting. It's disappointing that the NDP has once again chosen to oppose without offering any constructive solutions of their own.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is also for the Deputy Premier.

You know, it wasn't just Dalton McGuinty. The Liberal energy critic, Sean Conway, had this to say about Hydro One in 2002 in the lead-up to that 2003 election:

"The Tory government has no mandate to sell off the grid and there has been no consultation about such a sale ... The transmission grid—located in the heart of North America—is one of Ontario's most valuable assets. It is unbelievable that it is being sold without any discussion or debate."

I agree, Speaker. It is unbelievable that that's happening. Yet now the Liberal government is planning to do exactly what they crowed about and opposed so vehemently a decade ago.

Can the Deputy Premier explain to the people of this province how and when it is that the Liberals lost their way?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you know what's unbelievable? The unbelievable thing is that they ran on this plan. What is unbelievable is that you took the assumptions in our fiscal plan, which included maximizing assets, and you ran on it. So it's extraordinary that you ran on it but you didn't know about it.

Talking about losing your way, I have a letter here from May 2014. It says:

"Dear Andrea,

"We are writing to you as long-time supporters of the ONDP who are deeply distressed by the current election campaign ... In this election, we are seriously considering not voting NDP.

"We were angry when you voted against the most progressive budget in recent Ontario history."

I know they take offence. But let's see: Cathy Crowe signed this letter, Martha Friendly—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure you'll be getting some Dear Kathleen and Dear Deb letters pretty soon with the direction you're going through right now.

It wasn't just Dalton McGuinty or Sean Conway. Even Dwight Duncan, the former Liberal finance minister, said this about asset sales: "We're certainly not going to rush anything and we're not going to do it without what I would call a very robust and meaningful public conversation."

And yet here we are with a Liberal Premier who claims to be the most progressive leader since Confederation planning asset sales without any consultation whatsoever. Exactly how progressive is that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I hate to go back—but I will—to this letter from NDP supporters who say they were angry when the NDP voted against the most progressive budget in recent Ontario history.

They say: "You have not explained to ONDP voters why this will be a successful election strategy and why they should vote against their principles."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To continue, "It seems in your rush to the centre you are abandoning those values and constituencies that the party has always championed. If the NDP does not stand with working people, poor people, with women, with immigrants, then what does it stand for? We urge you to change course."

Speaker, Grace-Edward Galabuzi signed this letter, Michele Landsberg signed this letter, Geoff Bickerton—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —Patricia Chorney Rubin. Speaker, the list—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, the list is stopping.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure all of those folks are carefully watching the right-wing turn the Liberals have taken.

The bottom line is that privatization of hydro is a very, very bad idea. It always has been. We know first-hand that private hydro drives bills through the roof. It is bad for families and it is bad for businesses. The plan doesn't make sense and the Liberals know it.

Ontarians deserve to know how and why the Liberals lost their way when it comes to public hydro. Can the Deputy Premier explain why the Liberals are taking a page from Mike Harris's and Ernie Eves's playbook in planning to privatize Hydro One when they know full well that it is a very, very bad idea?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said yesterday, the easy part of being in opposition is that you get to oppose. But the part where you have a real responsibility is to actually provide constructive advice.

You say you want to build transit. You want to build transit, but you oppose it every step of the way. Once again, you're opposing investments in transit and in other kinds of infrastructure across this province. If you have a better way to pay for it, we would love to hear that.

We are committed to moving this province forward and to building this province up. We will do that by investing in much-needed infrastructure.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

Experts are warning us that your cap-and-trade tax scheme is vulnerable to fraud, manipulation, higher costs to businesses, and job losses.

The member from Leeds–Grenville asked you specifically how many jobs will be lost. You wouldn't answer him, so let's reach into the gas plant scandal file once again and read the confidential advice to cabinet. Your own file tells you how many job losses your carbon tax will bring to Ontarians. The once-secret document states that 5,000 jobs will be lost—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure will come to order—second time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Your once-secret document states that 5,000 jobs will be lost and result in "a relocation of business to lower-cost jurisdictions."

Deputy, why does it always take a secret document to get us the truth in this Legislature?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What is very much on the public record is that the PC Party has been captured by the climate-change deniers. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington said last June, "I'm very skeptical of climate change.... We can't worry about what's going to happen in 50 years." The member for

Carleton–Mississippi Mills said, “CO₂ is a positive gas. We need CO₂. There is a positive side to that.”

Speaker, I know that there have been many voices, including the member for Nipissing’s, that say we must take action. The question is: Why are you now saying that this action is not what we should be doing?

The business community has been vocal in their support of this because they see the opportunities. I think you should see those opportunities too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Deputy Premier, you knew about the 5,000 job-loss number. You were in cabinet when this was presented. Finance ministry officials told you about the job losses from your new revenue tools.

So let’s add the ministry numbers up—I know it hurts to hear these facts: 54,000 jobs lost in your pension tax scheme, and they said your cap-and-trade tax scheme will slash another 5,000 jobs or more.

Deputy, look around you. Can Ontario afford to lose another 60,000 jobs? You say this is about emissions, but we all know that it’s only about the cash needed to fuel your spending addiction.

What do you have to say now to those 5,000 families who are about to pay for your latest tax grab?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is interesting coming from a party that committed to firing 100,000 people. But let’s just say—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We’ve received a letter of support for our policy from Ontario business leaders. They say:

“We support your government’s intention to take measures to address climate change by establishing a transparent economy-wide price on carbon.

“We share your conviction that the test of a successful climate policy is one that also enhances our competitiveness and long-term prosperity.”

A number of people signed this letter, including people from Hewlett-Packard, Tembec, Teck Resources, Investeco Capital, The Co-operators Group, Desjardins Group, Jacob Securities, Vancity, Mountain Equipment Co-op, the Cement Association of Canada, Walker Industries, Interface Inc., Catalyst Paper, Philips Lighting Canada, Hydrogenics—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, last night my colleague from Windsor West and I attended a meeting in Amherstburg, where that community, along with Harrow and Kingsville, are being forced to pick and choose which community will get to keep its school. We listened as hundreds of parents gathered for an opportunity to speak out, but the meeting was limited to only 90 minutes of comments. Many did not get a chance.

Minister, why is this government silencing communities, that desperately want a say in their school closures, by cutting the required amount of community meetings in half?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m not sure how he thinks I determine the length of the meeting, but whatever.

What I think really is quite interesting is that there are a number of people on the side opposite who actually have a history as school trustees—as do I, and as do a number of people on our side. I think we need to think about the history of the people who were actually trustees.

For example, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, when she was a trustee, supported a motion to close Alison Park Public School and a motion to close Lincoln Avenue Public School.

You mentioned the member from Windsor West. When the member from Windsor West was a trustee on the Greater Essex County District School Board—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Again to the Minister of Education: Minister, this government’s choice to continue to use a flawed funding formula forces trustees to close schools, which means this government—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: What that means, Minister, is this government’s record for closing schools far exceeds any trustee’s.

Minister, it was clear last night that the communities affected are deeply concerned with what’s happening to their schools. Parent after parent came forward with innovative ideas on expanding the role of their schools into vibrant community hubs.

Instead of taking a proactive approach to the creation of community hubs, this government has chosen to ignore the concerns of families and close schools.

When will this government recognize the importance of neighbourhood schools, stop ignoring the concerns of families and stop closing schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let me just finish here. When the member from Windsor West was a trustee, she supported the closure of Forster secondary school. She supported the closure of Victoria Public School. She did not oppose the closure of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex will come to order—second time.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: And she didn’t—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: And she didn’t oppose the closure of Ruthven or Kingsville public schools, because what they recognized was that as demographics shift, things need to shift.

What she’s failing to recognize is that, in fact, we have put in the budget a \$750-million school consolidation fund

to help local boards do exactly what she's asking: create community hubs.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is to the Minister of Finance.

Minister, I understand that this morning, you visited the Digital Media Zone at Ryerson University. The DMZ is one of Canada's largest business incubators and working spaces for entrepreneurs, and it's based right here in Toronto. This unique community is home to entrepreneurs and innovators of all ages. In fact, innovation and encouraging Ontario's young entrepreneurs to succeed, ensuring that Ontario is globally competitive, are key priorities for this government.

In light of this, could the Minister of Finance please tell us more about his visit to the Digital Media Zone at Ryerson University this morning?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Burlington for the question.

Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right: The DMZ is the top-ranked university incubator in Canada and fifth in the world. It's a unique hub that helps start-ups succeed by connecting businesses with customers and young entrepreneurs.

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The member from Burlington is also quite right in the fact that encouraging and fostering innovative ideas is a key priority of this government. Investing in young entrepreneurs in Ontario, the future leaders of tomorrow, is a key component of the 2015 budget. And, Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure today to announce that budget date, and I am privileged to be able to table and deliver the 2015 budget in this very House on Thursday, April 23, 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is again to the Minister of Finance, and I'd like to thank him for his leadership.

Minister, I'm pleased to hear of the government's focus on supporting entrepreneurs and continuing to ensure that Ontario is an innovative hub not just in North America, but globally. It is fascinating projects like the DMZ at Ryerson University and innovative conversations happening in my own riding of Burlington, in partnership with McMaster University, that will help to make this future a reality.

I'm also pleased to hear that the 2015 budget will be tabled next week, on Thursday, April 23. I know that the people of Ontario, the people in my riding of Burlington and indeed all MPPs are eager to hear about our government's next steps in building Ontario up.

Could the Minister of Finance please tell this House a bit about the upcoming 2015 Ontario budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, thank you to the member for Burlington for a great question.

The budget will focus on a four-part plan to build Ontario up. It will continue to build in a dynamic, innovative and competitive business environment. Another

pillar will be to continue to invest in our people, especially young entrepreneurs. We'll also continue to invest and build on our infrastructure through unlocking those very assets that we hold so dear, and we will continue to ensure that the hard-working people of Ontario receive the retirement security that they well deserve.

Last June, the people of Ontario gave us a strong mandate to continue to build a better future for the people of this wonderful province, and with the 2015 budget that's going to be coming out we are doing just that. On April 23, I look forward to tabling what I believe to be one of the most progressive and innovative budgets the people of Ontario will have ever seen.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Minister, the Housing Services Corp. pays for its operations by overcharging social housing providers for natural gas and insurance. Instead of providing housing for our most vulnerable, the money is paying for international travel and investments in Manchester, England. CityHousing Hamilton reported that in one year they paid more than \$1 million extra because they have to buy through the Housing Services Corp. A million dollars, Mr. Minister—that's rent supplements for 140 families.

Minister, if Housing Services Corp. is siphoning more than \$1 million out of social housing in Hamilton, how much is it costing Toronto Community Housing?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: First off, Mr. Speaker, I want to correct a blatant inaccuracy from the member opposite when he suggested the other day, with a great degree of disingenuousness, that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: He uttered a number of terminological inexactitudes—

Interjection: That's much better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No better. Withdraw.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'll withdraw—when he suggested that we had removed the Housing Services Corp. from the sunshine list. He ought to know—I think he does know, Mr. Speaker—that you only get reported on the sunshine list if you're receiving government funds. They set it up that way when they put the legislation in place. That only happened once, and during that year it was reported, so he's incorrect.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, it isn't just Hamilton and Toronto. Housing Services Corp. cost Peel housing \$200,000 in one year; in Waterloo, \$10,000 each year; in Thunder Bay, \$750,000; Bruce county; Oxford; Hastings; Halton; Prince Edward; Lennox-Addington. If they weren't required to purchase services through Housing Services Corp., they could all help people who need social housing.

Minister, 100 housing providers who buy their insurance from someone else are still forced to pay 2.5% to the Housing Services Corp.

Will you support my bill and save housing providers millions by allowing them to buy the services at the best possible price they can find in the open market?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, the honourable member's bill will be debated very soon, and we'll see where people align themselves on that.

I can say, for the record, that the Housing Services Corp. is an independent, non-profit corporation. Their board is responsible for monitoring. They've made a number of changes at my request. We're currently undergoing a third-party, independent review of the corporation and all its subsidiaries.

I'd ask the honourable member to wait until we get that report, which will be coming very soon. If there are things we need to change as a government, as a result of that, you can be darned sure we're going to do it.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last month, Niagara Falls hosted a rally to show its united support of daily, all-year GO service all the way to Niagara Falls. The people want this and regional councils want this. The member from St. Catharines, who is the chair of the government's cabinet, spoke at the rally on the need for daily GO service to Niagara Falls. In fact, during the election campaign, the member from St. Catharines said, "I can see it coming in 2015."

Niagara is united in calling for all-year, daily GO service all the way to Niagara Falls. Was the government's cabinet chair correct to tell the people of Niagara that they can expect—expect—daily all-year GO rail service to Niagara Falls by 2015?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I actually want to begin by saying that I appreciate this question from this member. I believe this is actually the very first question this member has had the opportunity to ask me since becoming the NDP's transportation critic. I applaud him for becoming the critic for transportation, and I thank him very much for that question.

Speaker, I've had the opportunity on a number of occasions to speak with representatives from the region of Niagara. In fact, as that member knows, our member, my esteemed colleague the member from St. Catharines, has been a very persistent and staunch advocate for additional infrastructure improvements, advancements and investments in Niagara region, including Niagara GO service.

My understanding is that the Niagara region is working very hard with respect to the development of a business case. I look forward, over the next couple of weeks, to having the chance to meet with them, to hear directly from them about the findings of their business

case. The Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx will work with the region to study and analyze that business case and to continue to work on moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Minister, during the last election, the leader of your party, and the Premier of Ontario, said that bringing the GO train all the way to Niagara Falls "was a high, high priority." Despite this, Niagara is not mentioned anywhere in the Metrolinx report. You won't commit to a timeline, and now Metrolinx is telling us it's not a priority.

The incredible grassroots organization continues to call for this for Niagara. They have the support of all the mayors, the councils, regional councils, and even the chair of your caucus.

Can you tell the people of Niagara if this government plans to follow through on its words and bring daily two-way GO service to Niagara Falls in 2015?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank that member for his question and for his obvious passion on this. I think that member needs to recognize, as everyone does on this side of the House, that as we go forward with our infrastructure investments and how we prioritize those, all of our decisions regarding these matters will be based on a demonstrated business case and consideration of provincial infrastructure and budget priorities.

As I mentioned, I look forward to receiving that business case. Metrolinx is already working with Niagara region. We've heard, certainly, from the member from St. Catharines.

Speaker, people watching these proceedings—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He can't insinuate that somebody is lying, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, as I was saying, people watching these proceedings from home, from Niagara region, would have to remember that when that party had the opportunity to support our plan to invest \$29 billion over the next 10 years, they chose to reject it, not once but twice.

We're going to get the job done. We're going to move the province forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

1120

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. The Premier has prioritized burden reduction so that businesses small and large can continue to grow across the province. In my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, businesses have been asking me about this very important issue. Burden reduction was a prominent theme in both the 2014 throne speech and budget and is also included in the minister's public mandate letter.

Just recently, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released their provincial report card on this sub-

ject. Would the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please inform this House of Ontario's standing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Newmarket–Aurora for what is a really important question for us as an economy, and certainly for our small business community.

Since 2008, our government has eliminated more than one in six regulatory requirements, or 80,000 regulatory burdens. That's significant. In fact, we're working towards achieving our burden-reduction strategy, which will save close to \$100 million by 2016-17 for small businesses—very important for our economy.

Because of these accomplishments, in the CFIB's 2015 Red Tape Report Card, Ontario's strategic approach to burden reduction has earned this province a B+, tying for second with one other province for the highest mark in the country. We're proud of that record, but a B+, as far as I'm concerned, is not good enough, and we want to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm also very proud of our government's strategic approach to burden reduction. The CFIB's grade for Ontario further demonstrates the progress we've made.

As I understand it, the CFIB also praised our government for reintroducing and passing Bill 7, the Better Business Climate Act. This bill received all-party support in its passing. Would the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please inform this House of the importance of Bill 7 for government burden reduction?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member.

I want to thank all parties in the House for supporting Bill 7. This legislation is a clear reflection of our government working with key stakeholders to continue to grow Ontario's economy through burden reduction and cluster development, which is also really important. It was the CFIB's biggest ask a couple of years ago, and I give my predecessor credit as well for putting the beginnings of this bill together. It creates an open and transparent commitment to burden reduction. In many ways, it holds our government's feet to the fire; we have to report annually now on burden reduction, which is why the CFIB wanted us to work with them to do that.

We continue to be a national leader in reducing burden, but there's much more work to do. I'm looking forward, with this government, to working with the CFIB to continue to ensure that Ontario is a national leader in reducing regulatory burden.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, over the past several years the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association has called on both the federal and the provincial governments to adopt the standards of the international grading system to help

consolidate maple syrup producers, packers, distributors and consumers. The federal government has listened by implementing recent amendments to the Maple Products Regulations, and is being commended for their efforts, as this new uniform system will make it easier for consumers to identify and buy exactly what they want.

Minister, will your ministry follow suit by amending and aligning our provincial rules with the federal ones to ultimately modernize the maple syrup industry here in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank very much the honourable gentleman from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for asking me a question about the maple syrup industry in the province of Ontario.

We recognize on all sides of the House that the maple syrup industry is one of the oldest agriculture industries in the province of Ontario. Some 2,500 producers currently exist in Ontario. We harvest about 1.5 million litres of syrup, making Ontario one of the top three producers in Canada, grossing over \$32 million in maple product sales and contributing over \$53 million to Canada's GDP.

We're very aware of the new standards that have been brought in by the federal government, and I wanted to commend my good friend Ray Bonenberg, president of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association, for keeping his members engaged on this very important file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, as you know, this is not the first time we've talked about this. I've written you. I spoke to you about it on several occasions on behalf of Mr. Bonenberg and the industry.

This issue is very important to the industry. Its members don't have the luxury of waiting around while you and your ministry get your act together. This puts Ontario at a disadvantage which can no longer continue to go unaddressed. The provincial government needs to move forward as quickly as possible so that there's harmonization of the maple syrup grades.

Minister, you and your ministry have been dragging your feet and holding these amendments up, to the detriment of our maple syrup producers.

The time to act is now. Will you stop delaying and make the necessary amendments to regulation 119/11 before you head off on your trade mission to China? Help our industry before you head away.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In fact, in response to my good friend, I'll be in China selling maple syrup products produced right here in Ontario.

We are taking a bit of responsible time to consult with small, medium and large maple syrup producers in the province of Ontario. Consultations will seek to identify and address requests made by maple producers, including the grading and classification of maple products. We want to have a robust consultation and we're aiming to have something in place by January 1, 2016.

It's our view, when it comes to this policy, we want to make sure we're in the sweet spot with regard to maple syrup in Ontario.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

The Hamilton Port Authority continues to push ahead with plans for a risky garbage gasification plant on Hamilton Harbour. This plan would use unproven technology that exists nowhere else in the world save for a single small pilot project in England.

Last November, I asked the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to designate this project for a full environmental assessment. After assuring us that “of course there will be an environmental assessment,” five months later the minister has done nothing.

The city’s outside experts say that a full environmental assessment is absolutely necessary. Will the Liberals listen to the experts and designate this massive and risky gasification plant for a full environmental assessment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member knows, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is in Quebec with the Premier, working with other Premiers in other governments to develop an appropriate response to climate change and cap and trade.

I’m sure the minister will very much want to answer this question. I have been handed a note but I suspect you would like the answer from the minister. We’ll make sure you get that answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is that time is ticking away. The report from the city’s experts says the Hamilton gasification plant needs a full environmental assessment. It says the plant would be “the first commercial implementation of this type in the world ... There is no similar scale operational system using this technology.”

In other words, you can’t simply scale up the results from a tiny pilot project in England, as the proponent wants to do, and expect to understand the true environmental impact of this unproven technology in a project of this size. And yet, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is ready to bet the future of Hamilton Harbour on the results of a science fair project.

Will the Liberals listen to the people of Hamilton and the experts who wrote this report and order a full environmental assessment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: As mentioned, the minister is not here today. I don’t have a response from him directly on the particular issue that the member has raised, the leader of the third party. I do have a note, however, on Hamilton air issues generally and I can give you some of that information.

In 2011 the ministry introduced new or updated air standards for eight substances which are linked to health effects such as cancer, developmental effects or respiratory illnesses. These air standards take effect July 1, 2016. Improving air quality and combatting sources of air pollution is a top priority for the ministry. The ministry has issued site-specific standards for suspended particulate matter at four of Ontario’s iron and steel facilities.

This is in the context of Hamilton air issues generally. I don’t have a note for her specifically on the issues that she’s raised here today, but hopefully some of this information will provide some level of comfort that the ministry is on the issue when it comes to Hamilton air issues generally speaking.

1130

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We all know that our population is aging, and so too are the many long-term-care homes across the province that house our elderly population. While the care and delivery each and every day by our nurses, personal support workers, doctors, physiotherapists and other front-line health professionals is nothing short of excellent, we also want to ensure that our loved ones are in the best possible facilities.

In the fall, the minister announced incentives for operators to renew hundreds of older long-term-care homes in communities from one end of Ontario to the other. Mr. Speaker, could the minister provide an update to the House on the status of that important project?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Absolutely. I would be delighted to give an update. I want to begin by thanking the member from Kitchener Centre for the question and all of her advocacy for our seniors in this province.

I know that for our residents, a long-term-care home is just that: a home. All Ontarians who make long-term-care facilities their home deserve to live in comfortable, inviting and safe environments, Speaker. That is why our government is providing increased support to long-term-care-home operators to reach our goal of redeveloping 30,000 long-term-care beds. That’s about 300 homes, Speaker. That’s almost 50% of our homes that are going to be modernized.

We have been working with the sector to refine our supports in order to ensure this redevelopment program is successful. We recently distributed a survey to all our operators because we want to do this in a collaborative fashion.

The results have been great, Speaker, and I look forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to hear the minister’s commitment to ensuring that older Ontarians are getting the best care in the best environment possible.

The minister noted in her answer that our government is working with stakeholders to bring about this very substantial undertaking, and that kind of collaboration is essential for any project of this scale.

Long-term-care-home operators do have a vital role to play in seeing the success of the redevelopment of these plans, but the voices of residents and their loved ones are just as important. Could the minister please tell us what she is doing to ensure that all parties are at the table?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, thanks to the member for Kitchener Centre. She's absolutely right. We want this to be a collaborative process in which all stakeholders, whether they are operators, whether it's the LHIN, whether it's families or whether it's residents, have a say. That's why my ministry has established a stakeholder advisory group to guide us through redevelopment, which includes representatives, as I said, of operators, LHINs, municipalities, family councils and resident councils. My ministry is also in the process of conducting collaborative information sessions with stakeholders at locations across Ontario.

I also want to take a minute to give a shout-out to the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care who actually launched this process. Thank you so much, Minister Matthews.

I want to thank our stakeholders, as well as the folks in my ministry, the health capital branch, who have been truly burning the candle at both ends to make this a success.

SMOKING CESSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, your government has stated that public policy will be based on science and evidence. With Bill 45, you have done a grave disservice to the people of Ontario, and it is contrary to both science and evidence.

Countless studies and research have proven that vaporizers are the most effective smoking cessation tool. They have been demonstrated to be up to a hundredfold more effective than nicotine patches, gums or inhalers.

Bill 45 is entitled the Making Healthier Choices Act, yet you are taking away the most effective choice available to those trying to quit smoking and to live a healthier lifestyle. Minister, will you consider this overwhelming evidence in favour of the use of vaporizers as a cessation tool, or would you rather keep these people addicted to tobacco?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. I want to assure the member opposite that our goal in Ontario is to help smokers stop smoking, because that's the one way we're going to reduce smoking rates in Ontario.

What we've done with Bill 45 is actually taken a middle-of-the-road, responsible approach, because we're not banning e-cigarettes. We're not banning e-cigarettes; they continue to be legal, but what we are trying to do is to make sure that people who don't smoke at all—our youth—don't start taking up e-cigarettes and electronic cigarettes. Mr. Speaker, what we've really done is taken a very responsible approach, balancing both sides: making sure that smokers have the opportunity to switch to vaping, if they should so want, but also making sure that those who don't smoke at all don't start vaping.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It is not a middle-of-the-road approach; it is an extreme approach.

I can tell you the personal story of Brian Letts, who after smoking for 53 years finally quit smoking three years ago with a vaporizer. Or I can share with you the expert advice of Dr. Bhatnagar, a professor and practising cardiac surgeon with the University of Toronto. The professor has researched the use of vaporizers and has testified to how they are drastically reducing tobacco harm in our society.

Minister, in this case, the scientific evidence is overwhelmingly against your government's position. Will you listen to those who have finally been able to quit smoking and those in the medical and academic community who know that it is safe, and abandon your attack on people who want to quit smoking?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to assure the member opposite that his constituents can continue to vape cigarettes. And I respect Dr. Bhatnagar very much, but I also know that he runs an online vape store, so I just wanted to point that out.

I just want to continue to say that we believe that this is the right approach that our bill is taking. We've done wide stakeholder consultations and we look forward to this bill going through committee.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good morning to you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Ontario's Wilderness Discovery camp in northwestern Ontario enables persons with disabilities and their families to enjoy time outdoors, thanks to their accessibility and to their facilities. However, the Handicapped Action Group, which operates this camp, will be forced to shut its doors unless the financial picture changes dramatically.

For years, the province of Ontario has been leasing this land to the camp, but the lease is up, and now the province wants to sell the land the camp is built on for more than this not-for-profit organization can afford. Will this government commit to working with the Handicapped Action Group on a financial solution that will keep Ontario's Wilderness Discovery camp's doors open?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. Nobody has been forced to do anything. I would think that the member would likely be aware of that. I've spent a great deal of time working with executive director David Shannon on this file, as has my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

To repeat, the Handicapped Action Group Inc. has not been forced to do anything. They have very clearly, in their press release that they put out just this week, made a decision operationally on how they're going to deal with this issue. It is not in any way a decision that is being forced upon them. They have decided on their own to take the resources that they have, that they fundraised—there's never been operational support for the facility from the government of Ontario, never.

They've decided to take their operational money that they use to fund that resort and create new programming. They're going to use that money to provide for their

clients. That's what they've decided to do. The choice is theirs. We support them in the direction that they've chosen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act states that our province will be accessible to the 1.8 million Ontarians with disabilities by 2025. But 10 years later, it seems that our province is abandoning Ontarians with disabilities by forcing this camp's closure.

The current cost of operating this camp is roughly \$200,000 a year, which has been raised primarily through donations and fundraising. Petitions from concerned families and campers have already exceeded 20,000 signatures.

Will this government do what it needs to do to save and support the Wilderness Discovery resort for the disabled before they sell this crown land to the highest bidder?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure would love to weigh in on this but this is a question that—with his indulgence—I'm going to keep.

This is not in any way a decision that is being forced upon this group. The indication from me, very clearly, to Executive Director Shannon was that we would be more than happy to work with him on a longer-term solution to do anything that we needed to do. We have had discussions already in that regard with the minister responsible, through Infrastructure Ontario, for the property. The organization has made their decision on their own to take the money that they fundraised—they always did; there was never operational support from the province of Ontario—and they've made a decision to offer new and different programming to their clients.

I would add as well on this issue that many of the clients who were receiving the benefit of that resort were not clients from Thunder Bay–Atikokan or even from northern Ontario. There were very few clients who received support from HAGI who were actually taking advantage of this particular facility. The new program is likely to offer them greater opportunities through HAGI, and I support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

A point of order from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd just like to make the House aware that the Ontario Dental Association will be playing the Legiskaters tonight at—what's the rink?

Mr. Todd Smith: Upper Canada College.

Mr. Bill Walker: Upper Canada College. We welcome everyone to come out. We need lots of fans.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Oxford has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning social housing. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I don't see them here yet, but the St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School's grades 7 and 8 were visiting today and I hope to see them in the gallery shortly.

Mrs. Gila Martow: My friend Stewart Kiff is here. Unfortunately, today I'm giving a statement—and he's here to hear the statement—in French on the Rwandan genocide. Thank you for visiting.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to introduce my friend Stewart Kiff, who happens to be my neighbour, who is also in the gallery on this side. Welcome, Stewart Kiff.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNIVERSAIRE DU GÉNOCIDE AU RWANDA

M^{me} Gila Martow: Monsieur le Président, nous commémorons un triste anniversaire, une série d'actes de cruauté qui a eu lieu il y a deux décennies : le génocide rwandais. Pendant une période d'infamie marquée par une brutalité sans précédent dans l'histoire de l'humanité, cette tragédie a entraîné la mort d'environ un million d'êtres humains, sans aucun motif autre que leur identité ethnique. Au cours des années qui ont suivi la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la mise en oeuvre d'une hiérarchie raciste basée sur une idéologie perverse y a semé la haine.

Cinq décennies plus tard, ces politiques se sont révélées comme un échec illustré par une perpétuelle escalade des conflits et des sentiments de haine. C'est tragiquement qu'en 1994, un plan vicieux et malin a déclenché et qu'une vague de violence fut commise à l'encontre des Tutsis, avec comme résultat des centaines de milliers de morts, des milliers de blessés, de disparus et de familles déplacées. Quelle horreur.

Malheureusement, de nos jours, nous sommes encore témoins de la montée d'un mouvement terroriste qui menace de répéter le niveau de violence qu'ont subie les Rwandais. Au nom de tous les Ontariens, je déclare sincèrement : nous ne nous défilons jamais devant le mal.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Normally I would use my member's statement to highlight some of the great things that are happening in my riding. Unfortunately, I have to stand here today to highlight something pretty shameful that's going on in the riding of Essex.

There are five schools at risk that are in the PARC process, at risk of being closed in my area. They are

Western high school, Harrow high school, General Amherst, Kingsville high and Harrow public school.

Listening to the Minister of Education's answer today to some of our questions about the fact they're cutting consultation with the community really emphasizes how tragic and shameful this government's handling of our education system has been.

Western high school is one of the very few vocational schools in southwestern Ontario. You'd have to go all the way to Sarnia to find another vocational school that deals with some of the kids in our area who have high learning disabilities. It is a refuge; it's a safe haven. We heard that last night at the PARC consultation; we heard it from students, we heard it from parents, we heard it from faculty.

In the Windsor Star there was a report that we're looking for 300 skilled trade jobs right now out of Windsor. That's a place where those skilled trade jobs are trained, where students are trained and can enter the workforce, but the government is going to cut that school from our community. It's absolutely shameful and it's reprehensible.

Any conjecture on the Liberals' part to say that they're doing all they can and they've maintained stable funding is absolutely ludicrous. They have to fix this issue and have to fix the funding formula.

BUSINESS AWARDS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and acknowledge some remarkable citizens and business leaders in my riding of Halton. Over the past few weeks I've been fortunate to attend a series of chamber of commerce community awards in Oakville, Burlington and Milton. Each of these events had their own unique charm and personality. The events in Burlington and Oakville were focused on leaders in many different business fields, including not-for-profit, heritage, retail and conservation. The Milton awards also recognized community leaders, naming its Citizen of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards. All nominees and the 25 winners were people and businesses who went above and beyond to achieve something great for our community. All of the businesses continue to be the bedrock of our strong, local economies.

Among the winners were Burlington's Young Entrepreneur of the Year: Dave McSporran, Bottled Media. Oakville's Business Icon Award went to Pelmorex Media/The Weather Network. Retail Business of the Year in Burlington went to Christy's chocolates, and Milton's Lifetime Achievement Award winner was Rita Albin Curtis.

I can tell you that some of the acceptance speeches were really very inspirational. By celebrating hard work, ingenuity and passion, these galas are a vital part of keeping our community strong. They bring people together to celebrate the successes of our community. I'd like to congratulate all of the winners and nominees and I look forward to the incredible accomplishments we'll be seeing from Halton residents in the year to come.

SUZANNE LEARN

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize a dedicated constituent whose hard work and progressive vision have strengthened her community through the revival of the South River/Machar Agricultural Society and her participation with other volunteer organizations.

Suzanne Learn is the recipient of the 2015 Don Ivens Memorial Community Volunteer Award, presented by the South River Lions Club. She is the youngest-ever recipient of the award, and her community is thrilled to see her recognized for all her accomplishments.

Suzanne has been a member of the agricultural society board for five years and the president for the past four. She is the driving force behind events such as the annual 100-Mile Dinner, which showcases local farmers; the South River/Machar Taffy Pull; and reviving old events such as the fall agricultural fair.

In addition to her work with the agricultural society, Suzanne also volunteers with the United Church's Daisy Chain Drop-in Centre and with the South River Public School Student Advisory Committee, and has helped out with the Lions Club Canada Day celebration.

A mother of three young boys, Suzanne has actively engaged the younger generation to become involved in community events. Leading by example, she is inspiring volunteers of all ages to action. I'm pleased to see her dedication recognized and to share her accomplishments with you today. Congratulations, Suzanne.

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as we've discussed, I will be asking for unanimous consent for a moment of silence at the end of statements. I want to note the presence of Mr. Théophile Rwigimba and other members of the Rwandan diaspora who are here today.

I also want to note my colleague Ms. Martow and my colleague Madame Lalonde, who have spoken and will speak to this matter.

Today in this Legislature we mark the 21st anniversary of the launch of the genocide against the Tutsis of Rwanda. Last year, we solemnly recognized the event in this very chamber, an event recognized by the people of Rwanda and globally as "Kwibuka." Kwibuka is the Kinyarwanda word for "Remember."

As part of the past ceremonies of Kwibuka, survivors have spoken movingly of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide. As horrible as the experiences were for those who died during them or lived through them, they're even more painful because they were preventable. Rwandans died while the international community looked the other way or was actively complicit. The facts are staggering. As cited by MP Irwin Cotler, "in less than 100 days, beginning on April 7, 1994, one million Rwandans, mostly ethnic Tutsis, were slaughtered, victims of a government-orchestrated campaign of incendiary incitement and unspeakable violence."

1510

Members of the Rwandan community are here with us today to commemorate this sombre occasion, to remind us that terrible wrongs can arise out of intolerance, hatred and racism.

I ask this House for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to commemorate all those who were lost and to carry forward the memory of what they went through so we can avoid such genocides in the future.

ANNIVERSAIRE DU GÉNOCIDE AU RWANDA

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir de discuter aujourd'hui, de faire une déclaration sur ce sujet.

En 1994 un génocide a été perpétré contre les Tutsis au Rwanda. Il a été qualifié parmi les plus rapides et les plus odieux de l'histoire de l'humanité. Le génocide reste toujours dans la mémoire des Rwandais. Entre 800 000 et un million de personnes—enfants, femmes et hommes—ont été tuées sur une courte période. Ceci représente plus de 80 % de la population tutsie qui a été tuée.

The memory of these terrible events lingers today.

Le peuple rwandais est un peuple qui partage une même histoire, une langue, une religion et une culture depuis des siècles. Ce génocide ne fut pas le fruit du hasard. Ce sont les divisions ethniques qui ont été entretenues et renforcées, d'où cette terrible tragédie humaine.

April 7 has been designated by the United Nations as the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda.

Nos pensées dans ce temps de commémoration sont adressées au peuple rwandais, aux survivantes et aux survivants. Les victimes seront toujours au sein de nos pensées et ne seront jamais oubliées.

Que le monde entier se lève ensemble aujourd'hui pour dire : plus jamais.

Please stand with the international community to say: Never again.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakubski: The cost of hydro continues to escalate beyond belief. Municipalities all across the province, including those in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, are extremely frustrated with Ontario's skyrocketing rates which have tripled since the Liberals came into power in 2003. These unaffordable rates are a product of the smart meter fiasco, gas plant scandals and, the mother of all energy disasters, the Green Energy Act.

Every day our municipal partners hear from residents who find themselves in desperate situations. Average Ontarians have to choose between filling up the car, buying groceries or paying their hydro bill. The exorbi-

tant cost of electricity is also driving business to consider leaving Ontario.

The township of Madawaska Valley in my riding is one of many municipalities that has fallen victim to the Liberals' failed energy policies, making it hard for residents and businesses to afford hydro and to ultimately thrive and prosper.

In response to these outrageous rates, the council of the township of Madawaska Valley has passed a resolution that calls on the Premier to mitigate current rates and prevent any further rate increases from being implemented. The township of Admaston/Bromley has passed a similar resolution.

It's an impossible situation for municipalities because it's the provincial policies that are making hydro unaffordable.

Minister, this is not just a plea from the official opposition. It crosses all political lines and comes from all levels of government. This is unaffordable, unsustainable, and you have got to change course.

VAISAKHI

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I stand in this House to speak on the festival of Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi is a harvest festival traditionally celebrated by farming communities. It symbolizes the changing of the seasons and the coming of spring. Falling in the middle of April, it marks the harvest of winter crops. The festival is celebrated as a thanksgiving day by the farmers to pay tribute to a successful harvest.

Vaisakhi is an important day for the Sikh religion. On this day in 1699, as thousands of Sikhs gathered at Anandpur Sahib to celebrate the festival of Vaisakhi, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th Sikh guru, laid the foundations of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith.

On this day, the surname Singh was created to remove all barriers of a caste system which allowed people to be distinguished or segregated based on a surname. A social revolution which promoted equality had begun, one which judges no person based on their gender, race, religion or colour.

Sikhism's teachings of commitment to justice and equality are values that are not only cherished by members of the Sikh community, but are the values shared by all Canadians.

The festival of Vaisakhi also includes processions otherwise known as the Nagar Kirtan, or the Khalsa Day Parade.

I would like to wish all of those celebrating a very happy Vaisakhi. I would also like to encourage all members of the House to join in celebrations in their ridings which will be held all over Ontario in the coming weeks.

FLOYD SINTON

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I rise today in memory of a beloved community leader and business owner from Craighurst who passed away on March 18. Floyd Sinton

was a man who dedicated his life to his family and the families in his community.

I first met Floyd and his wonderful wife, Barb, at a Halloween costume party. They were the life the party. As an educator I later dealt with Floyd and Barb as they picked up and dropped off students at Forest Hill school in Midhurst. Not only did they transport our students with care, compassion and humour, things needed by the school would suddenly appear after speaking to them. As we debated Bill 31, I often thought of him when we talked about school buses. The safety of those children was paramount to the Sintons.

At the age of 16, Floyd was working with his dad at their family-owned service station in Craighurst. It was at that time that Floyd borrowed \$900 from his father to buy a 20-passenger bus. From this one bus, Floyd started his business and began transporting students daily to and from Barrie. The business grew from that one route to a company with 500 employees servicing the communities of Collingwood and Newmarket, with various contracts with local school boards, which was run by their late son, Stan.

Floyd, Barb and Stan also consistently donated time, money and resources to many local organizations. Floyd was a remarkable man who gave much to his community, his family and his friends. He will be sorely missed.

ANNIVERSARY OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Toronto–Danforth has asked for unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the Rwandan genocide.

Is there consent? Agreed.

Would everyone join me in standing for a moment of silence?

The House observed a moment's silence.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader says we have unanimous consent to move a motion on the Standing Committee on General Government. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2015, for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2015, for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give particular emphasis to (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can be practically and efficiently recycled or reused so as to not require disposal."

I thank you very much for the time to present this petition, and I affix my signature, as I agree with it.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislature...:

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and ... Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

Speaker, I fully agree with this petition, and I will affix my name to it and give it to Joshua to take up to the Clerk.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

Speaker, I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Joshua.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Thomas.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes to me from Dianne Luttrell. She is from Garson, in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Afayah to bring it to the Clerk.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it's entitled

"Population-based legal services funding." It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds ... and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to send it down with page Cailyn.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Toby Barrett: These signatures are addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

"Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand-Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect."

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease

consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

I support this petition and present it to page Samantha to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

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"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Misha to bring forward.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is

responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I fully agree, will assign my name and give it to Luca to bring up to the desk.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly that, in aggregate, will average out with the last one to make them both reasonable-sized petitions.

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school ... in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools...; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary

school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and leave it with page Joshua.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. I wonder if there is any room for petition signatures after that lengthy one.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act ... is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came to me from M. Marc Chartrand, who is one of my constituents in Val Caron, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services including hospital cleaning, and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including in-patient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care and the emergency department; and

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services;

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Thomas to bring it to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Nickel Belt. The time allotted for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISSANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me first say that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Trinity-Spadina, Ottawa-Orléans and Durham.

In the few minutes that I have to talk about this—it is so important. It's important for rural Ontario. It's important for all of us in Ontario. As times change, we recognize that certain species don't belong in certain areas, and because they are there they create an enormous amount of damage and disturb the ecosystem that we enjoy.

Let's just review a little bit what Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act, is doing. This has been reintroduced—it's been around the bend once. The government is taking action to address the serious threat of invasive species to Ontario's economy and to our natural environment. In February, our government first introduced the proposed Invasive Species Act and reintroduced this proposed legislation on November 5, 2014. If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive species legislation.

Let's look at some of the threats if we don't do this. Invasive species impact the life of every Ontarian, as I've said in the past, and the cost to the Ontario economy is tens of millions of dollars each year. There are jobs at risk in the forestry industry, in the commercial and recreational fishing industries, not to mention tourism.

1540

Let's look at some of the impacts of some of the invasive species that already exist in Ontario. I'm sure most of us in this chamber have heard this before.

Let's look at zebra mussels. They are famous for clogging the intake pipes of municipal water supplies and hydroelectric companies—therefore, with the enjoyment of our lakes and rivers. It's estimated that zebra mussels are costing the province some \$75 million to \$90 million each and every year to manage—and make sure that these pipes stay free.

The other invasive species that we know is here already is the ruffe. This species can seriously damage native sport fish populations such as yellow perch—I

know my seatmate is an avid fisherman—by directly competing for food and habitat or through heavy predation of native sport fish eggs. Ruffe can very quickly become the most dominant fish in our local areas because of their rapid reproduction and growth rates. This puts pressure on native species and contributes to their decline.

Those are just a couple of species that we have here already interfering with our ecological system.

Let's talk a little bit about species that are not here yet but which we're certainly worried are going to be here.

The mountain pine beetle is in western Canada.

Ms. Soo Wong: Bad news.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is bad news, my colleague here tells me, and it is. It's an insect responsible for destroying millions of hectares of pine trees in British Columbia—that's one of their main industries, forestry—increasing the risk of large fires with dead and dying trees creating landscapes of highly flammable material; and loss of wildlife during one of these fires. They degrade the overall visual quality of the forest. It's not a forest anymore.

The Asian carp has already migrated through the US in many waterways.

These are just the types of things, as legislators in this House, we need to deal with to, frankly, look after our future.

I would encourage, as we debate Bill 37, that we get it passed through second reading, get it to committee, and let's refine it because it's something that we really, really need.

Speaker, with that, I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing on with debate, I recognize the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my honour and my personal interest, actually, to debate this bill. As many of my friends and colleagues know, I'm a sports fisherman. I have—

Applause.

Mr. Han Dong: There you go, Percy.

I have an aluminum fishing boat. I have two young kids. You know how dedicated I am. Every time I go out, I have to squeeze a little bit of time to go out and provide some explanation to my wife and family. So this bill is very important to me.

It speaks to prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province. To me, early detection and response is key, because, as a fisherman, I've seen the changes in the water. I pay attention to small changes.

I have noticed in the lake that I fish that the introduction of zebra mussels, for example, really clears out the lake and changes the entire ecosystem, the species in the water; the abundance of, for example, walleyes. That species in particular is under a lot of threat because of these invasive species such as zebra mussels.

Gobies eat up all the eggs after spawns.

I have noticed a tremendous reduction in some of the lakes I've enjoyed fishing in over the years. We've got to do something about that.

Asian carp: I'm sure some of the members here—and I've actually heard that from my constituency who watched some of the YouTube clips on how invasive and how dangerous they could be, especially in small ponds and small rivers. They can grow huge, and they respond to any splashing and can jump and seriously threaten the participants of various water sports.

I look at the economic impact these invasive species will have on our rural communities which heavily depend on tourism. Whether it's the Americans or whether it's recreational fishermen across the world, they come to Canada, they come to Ontario, to enjoy the natural resources we have to offer here. Keep in mind, we're in competition with other jurisdictions.

I understand that if this bill is passed, Ontario will be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation. That puts us in a very competitive position when it comes to tourism and competing with the rest of the country. So I am extremely pleased to debate on this bill, and I look forward to more debate from my colleagues and hopefully from across the floor. I'm happy to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along, I now recognize the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 36, the Invasive Species Act. As many of you know, I am passionate about our environment and our ecosystem.

We are blessed with diverse nature and some of the world's most scenic land and species, and it is important that we protect our critters for now and the future. The protection of our environment and our ecosystem is something this government takes seriously. If passed, Bill 36 will provide a strong legislative framework to better prevent, detect, rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species.

My riding of Ottawa—Orléans borders on the Ottawa River. It is important that the House passes this bill so we can have stronger tools to protect the Ottawa River. One invasive species, the European water chestnut, has been found in the Ottawa River, specifically in Chute-à-Blondeau's Voyageur national park. Invasive species are a major concern for the Ottawa River.

Beyond the European water chestnut, the Asian carp, which has not yet arrived in Ontario, could have a serious impact on the Great Lakes and many rivers. The Asian carp, which is currently in many US waterways, must be stopped before entering the Great Lakes and our waterways. If the Asian carp becomes established in Ontario, they could potentially eat the food supply that our native fish depend on and crowd them out of their habitats.

Bill 36 addresses the serious concern that invasive species pose to Ontario's nature and economy. It is estimated that invasive species cost both the US and Canada a combined \$500 billion. Invasive species affect our economy, our wildlife and our ecosystems.

I am proud that Ontario is creating a specific invasive species tool to combat this serious problem. This bill

enhances Ontario's ability to react to the problem of invasive species and would be the first stand-alone legislation in Canada to do this.

Ottawa—Orléans is home to one of Ottawa's most scenic islands, a natural gem that I encourage you to visit whenever you visit Ottawa: our dearest Petrie Island. The island is a significant area of natural and scientific interest, as well as being a beautiful place to spend time. Petrie Island has hiking trails, beach volleyball, kayaking and a nature centre. The island even hosts ice fishing in the winter.

1550

The protection of Petrie Island and the Ottawa River is something I am excited to support, and Bill 36 has the tools to protect the island. Petrie Island is home to wetlands, which provide a home to wildlife, improve the water quality of the river and provide families and people alike with the beautiful sights and scenery of nature. The wetlands of Petrie Island are home to some of the highest quality wetlands. We must continue to protect the wetlands for our wildlife. This is exactly what Bill 36 will do.

The rusty crayfish is an invasive species that has become a problem to the native species of crayfish in the wetlands of Petrie Island. The rusty crayfish compete for food with the native crayfish. In many circumstances, the rusty crayfish actually win in this competition. We recognize the need to stop this type of fish from destroying the native species of crayfish at Petrie Island and across Ontario. That is why I am proud to stand up and support Bill 36, the Invasive Species Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans. Continuing along, I recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to my colleagues who have spoken to this bill. It's a pleasure for me to add my two cents' worth to this bill. I am glad to be speaking to the Invasive Species Act today. We are talking about a very pressing concern for our natural sustainability today, one that has implications beyond rural and forested areas. The threat of invasive species is broad-sweeping, and the prevention of the spread of invasive species is of paramount importance. Once they're here, they're very difficult to be rid of, and it is very difficult to reverse their influence.

Expanding the minister's power to battle invasive species is something I think we should all support and encourage. Our forests and waterways are vital to our success as a province and as a country in more ways than as countable resources. They're important for communities and characterize the most beautiful and prosperous parts of our great province.

Coming from Clarington, and also representing the municipalities of Scugog and Uxbridge, I know very well the influence of beautiful and accessible forests, parks and natural spaces on those who are lucky enough to live in communities that house them. But invasive species threaten this balance. They threaten to invade our pine trees, eradicate our maples, sap our waterways of their

diversity and out-compete our native plant life. In the grand sense of things, they threaten our way of life and the balance that maintains our environment.

There are currently a plethora of provincial and federal acts that create a patchwork of legislation that tries to combat the spread of invasive species. In their conflicting implementation, they create holes where they may fail to achieve our preventive and proactive goals. None of this existing legislation has the specificity that is needed to effectively ensure that Ontario's native species are protected from damaging competition and to keep the problem from spreading. What we need is a framework to ensure that we respond quickly and efficiently to new threats, that we're better able to detect when a threat may be impending, and that can enable us to quickly come up with a plan to eradicate any species that threaten our native flora and fauna.

This legislation will ensure that we as a government have those abilities. We would be able to respond more quickly, to make decisions earlier and to ensure that invasive species do not have the opportunity to establish themselves in Ontario. For those who may wish to trade in dangerous species, we would have the ability to impose sanctions and prohibitions, and we would have the ability to promote compliance through inspection and enforcement. These abilities are supported by many groups and sustainability advocates, including the anglers and hunters, the Invasive Species Centre and Ducks Unlimited Canada—a ringing endorsement of necessary legislation.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to encourage the passage of this bill today, and to speak on behalf of the residents of Durham when I say that the protection of our natural resources is incredibly important, from the Ganaraska Forest to Darlington Provincial Park, to the shores of Lake Scugog, the Glen Major Forest and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes on my way up to Peterborough I see signs talking about the emerald ash borer, which is in the riding of my colleague from Peterborough. The emerald ash borer was first found in Canada in Windsor, Ontario, in 2002. Since then, the beetle has spread across much of southwestern Ontario, Sault Ste. Marie and the Ottawa area. Once infested, the mortality of ash trees is nearly 100%.

Ontario municipalities have spent over \$71 million managing the beetle, and over the next 10 years plan to spend an additional \$240 million. The beetle is a significant threat to our forestry. That's just one single instance of what these insects can do to our forestry, to our communities and to the beauty of Ontario and the beauty of this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, is it a point of order?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm so sorry. I think I referred to this bill as 36, and it was 37, so I would just like to clarify. Sorry for that.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Correct your record.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I correct my record. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That is a point of order, and you are allowed to correct your record. Thank you for doing so.

Comments and questions.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. I'm pleased to bring some remarks in reaction to the speed debating that we saw on the other side of the House. We had four members who used up 18 minutes to talk about a very important bill; that's Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

This is important to all corners of the province of Ontario. I come from Prince Edward-Hastings, and we have the beautiful Bay of Quinte, one of the great fishing destinations in Ontario, world-famous for its walleye fishing. I know they've had a serious problem for the last 20 years in the Bay of Quinte with an invasive species called the zebra mussel.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West was the first amongst the Liberal members here this afternoon to speak on the bill, and he did acknowledge the fact that the zebra mussel probably came in through the St. Lawrence Seaway back in the mid-1980s, at the bottom of a freighter on its way into Lake Ontario. It's been there ever since, and it's been causing a lot of problems. It's an invasive species that clogs water pipes that come to and from our water treatment plants and our power plants, and it creates a problem there. It damages our harbours, it damages the boats that dock at our marinas and it does serious damage to a world-class fishery. It changes the environment. That's just one example, at the south end of my riding.

At the north end of my riding—I believe it was perhaps the member from Durham, who just spoke, who mentioned the fact about the beetles and the damage that they're doing to our forestry sector. There are all kinds of examples of these invasive species.

This bill takes some steps that are much-needed to guard against invasive species, but this bill doesn't take a preventive approach. That's one of the areas that we can improve on when we get this bill to committee, but for starters, Bill 37 is a step in the right direction. The Invasive Species Act will get support from the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand in place today and to make reference to the various members of the Liberal caucus who've spoken on the need for this bill. I agree. I remember, back in the 1970s or before, when we talked about the sea lamprey getting into the Great Lakes, that eel, that sucker that was destroying so many good fish. That was followed by the spiny water flea, the goby, the round goby, zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, and the emerald ash borer. You can't tell me much about the emerald ash borer; I was on city council when we spent millions of dollars trying to eradicate it in our area and trying to replace so many ash trees that we

lost. Phragmites and now the threat of Asian carp getting into the Great Lakes—major problems.

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Currently we have a patchwork of about 20 federal and provincial bills dealing with invasive species. This bill, at least, will consolidate the Ontario bills, the provincial bills, into one and under one ministry; that is long overdue.

I guess the thing that troubles me about the bill is that, in order for it to be effective, you will need to hire more inspectors. You will need to send people out to monitor the situation and to do research. Instead, the ministry is one of the many under this government that is being cut 6% a year for the next three years. So how are we ever going to monitor, police and enforce this new bill without the people to do it? You can't bring in something like this and expect the current staff to do it, because there's so much work that needs to be done, so many more areas and jobs and jurisdictions that need to be monitored and researched. There's just no money on the table for it.

So I support the bill, and wish them luck in making it happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Good afternoon. It's a pleasure for me to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

A number of my colleagues on this side of the House and some colleagues on the other side have talked about some of the invasive species that are currently here in Ontario, including the zebra mussels and the emerald ash borer, which I may talk about later if I have a bit of time. But we've also talked about the ones that are not yet in Ontario; that is of great, great concern to myself, Mr. Speaker.

There has been some discussion of federal and provincial acts that govern invasive species, but they're not really designed for that. I'll just outline a couple of them. The Canada Shipping Act is federal, and it manages the discharge of ballast water. The Plant Diseases Act is a provincial act that bans the transport and sale of diseased plants, which could include an invasive insect or pathogen. The Public Lands Act is provincial, and it allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines. But what's important is that this proposed legislation is going to help address some of those legislative gaps that currently exist, as none of these laws actually deal specifically and directly with invasive species.

Some of the key elements of the act, that the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has put forward, would help the government by providing the powers to intervene earlier so invasive species do not become established here in Ontario. It would also give the government the tools to prohibit activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species, but it would also enable rapid response actions to address urgent threats.

The member from Windsor—Tecumseh spoke about his involvement in 2002 with regard to the emerald ash

borer. I can tell you, it has moved completely across the province into Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. As a matter of fact, we heat with wood in the winter now, and I was fortunate enough to have good ash trees, but unfortunately invasive species had killed them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to add my comments to this debate, although I have already spoken to this bill for about an hour. I do know that the member across the way just mentioned the emerald ash borer, which was a terrible plight to many of the forests, especially down in the Essex area and probably your area too, Speaker.

The concerns we do have with this bill that the government has yet to address—and I kind of wish they would give their members a little more time than two minutes to speak on this bill, then they could actually have a fleshed-out debate, where they could actually answer our questions that we've brought forward.

But step 1 is: This government and this new bill will allow the MNR to decide if they are allowed to enter your property and clear-cut your forest, if they think the emerald ash borer is coming on. At the end of the day, after they clear-cut your forest on your own property—without discussing it with the landowner, because this bill says you don't have to—they can just pass the bill on to the landowner and say, "Now you have to pay for it." I think that's a little risky. My say is that we're moving from the Legislature into a bureaucracy which now is given the ability to enter anybody's property, do what they want to that property and then make you pay for it. I think that's dangerous ground, and I'd love to have someone from the government discuss that, but obviously they're not interested in having a debate; they are interested in rushing this bill through. I'd rather we do it slowly, do it right, and maybe talk about an amendment to fix this problem, because I don't know about you, but my constituents aren't happy with that part of the bill.

There are other parts of the bill, which I did talk about in my hour debate, that are concerns of mine. I have yet to hear them talk about maybe making this bill a little more preventative. This bill is reactive; we wait until the invasive species are in our province and then we deal with them. Why not deal with them before they get here? Why don't we prevent them from entering our province?

They don't want to have this discussion. They would rather rush through their speakers and rush through the bill, and they are going to mess things up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West for final comments.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Perfect, Speaker. Practice makes perfect.

First of all, I want to thank all the members—the members from Prince Edward—Hastings, Windsor—Tecumseh, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and Elgin—Middlesex—London—for responding to our 20-minute contribution towards the bill.

A couple of things. First, I'm sure most of you know that the member from Prince Edward—Hastings is my

neighbour to the east. We cross jurisdictions in a lot of places. One of the things that people ask me when I'm in that middle ground is, "Do you folks agree on things at Queen's Park?", because obviously, if they watch the House, we seldom agree on anything. Today, I must say that we do agree on something, so it gives me something I'll bring back to the residents.

As far as the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London's comment about how we need to speak longer on this, the opportunity is here. This is not a closure motion; it's to debate. So I hope everybody gets to do that, to add to the debate. I'm glad to hear that generally we all support this, so I think we can make it happen.

Speaker, in the last less than a minute, I didn't mention during my speaking points that when it comes to looking after costs for these things—in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, in a portion of the Trent River, we had what we called a water soldier, which is an invasive species of plant that just destroys some of the habitat, some of the boating opportunities. I can thank the Ministry of Natural Resources. It had been growing for about two years and it was really, really spreading. Just last summer, through no cost to the local residents, the Ministry of Natural Resources looked after this. Biologists found that with proper treatment—I'm not sure if we eradicated it all, but 99% is gone. So I think when issues arise, we're there as a government to try to deal with it.

Again, thank you for the support from all sides of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the chance to address Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. When this legislation is passed, as we know, Ontario would end up being the first and only province to have stand-alone legislation with respect to invasive species. This would be an admirable accomplishment, given the tremendous problems we've been hearing about during debate here in the Legislature, whether it's phragmites or Asian carp or the emerald ash borer—it's in our bush now. I won't be able to cut up those trees fast enough as they die.

But we don't want this to be merely warm, fuzzy, feel-good legislation that really doesn't accomplish anything, given the task at hand. Speaking with our critic, it's very important that this goes to committee, where we can hear from outdoors men and women, farmers, people who work in the field who have studied this very, very complex issue and the variety of animal and plant species that are involved and lumped under the title "invasive species."

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It's got to have some teeth. It's got to be designed to truly tackle some of the problems but not take an easy way out. There is concern among landowners that they would be targeted and held responsible if they end up unwittingly harbouring some of these species, as Jeff Yurek, our MNR critic, advocates.

Prevention is also so important in having a comprehensive approach to what is a set of very serious problems across the province.

I am guilty. I'm one of those landowners who harbours invasive species, not necessarily because I want to. Some have arrived—some have arrived courtesy of my wife, actually; she picked up stuff at a landscaper's a number of years ago. She threw about a dozen goldfish in our pond; now we've got about 600 goldfish in there. However, that provides habitat for bittern and great blue herons. We've got a snapping turtle down there. Let me think now, there are a few other species that just love goldfish—kingfishers, for example. When you see a kingfisher with a goldfish, it looks like he's got a gigantic orange bill. That's the goldfish going down into the gullet.

I'll just relate my personal battle over a number of years with phragmites. This is the Norfolk reed, the pampas grass. It's very high grass that replaces cattails, for example. We see them in the ditches. They first arrived down south of Windsor a number of years ago and spread their way on up through. If you drive down Highway 402 down to Sarnia, for example—courtesy of our Ministry of Transportation, we now have phragmites stretching across the province of Ontario. I don't know whether Bob Bailey had anything to do with that but it's something. We all work on some approaches to that. This is an invasive species that's spread along government land.

They're hard to kill. They spread through the seeds; they spread through the roots. You can dig out your pond and dump it somewhere in a ravine, and then you've got phragmites down through your ravine. I certainly know that on my farm.

When these non-native plants are introduced and established, it obviously disrupts the established ecosystem. It forces out the native species, and whenever you have a decrease in the native species, you have less diversity, less biodiversity. This, in turn, means less food and shelter for wildlife that have been dependent on those native plants, certainly since the last ice age, in this part of the world. It's a ripple effect, and it cascades through the whole ecosystem.

The challenge when they arrive is that there aren't any native species that can serve as predation or control. In the ecosystem they left, over thousands of years, there would have been natural controls: insects, animals, diseases, fungus—things like that that act as a control.

In my battle with phragmites in my pond, early on, I would cut them down in the winter. I would cut them down in the summer. Sometimes I would shave them off on the ice in the winter, and then I fell through one day, and there goes my BlackBerry. If you ever break through the ice in the winter, forget about your BlackBerry. I had my BlackBerry with me just in case I did fall through, so I could use my phone, but that was the first thing to go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're glad you made it back.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I don't even remember climbing out but I got out quite rapidly.

There's been some success in knocking them down and spraying them with glyphosate, or Roundup. Roundup is obviously a very effective weed control. There are restrictions: You don't spray Roundup over water. I've used a few techniques myself using a very large paint roller to wick the leaves, without any product going in the water, but I'm sure that's illegal as well, but I have had some good success using that technique.

We've got to work on some practical techniques beyond this legislation to help landowners, farmers, people to control these kinds of things because MNR and MTO staff really don't have the resources to get out there and right the balance with so many of these particular products.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: MPP Bailey mentioned goats. I used to have a number of goats. I'll never do that again. I put them along the edges of the pond and I found that you can give goats just about anything, the finest alfalfa and clover and grain, but if they see some phragmites, these dry, ugly leaves, they'll go for the phragmites. Goats love phragmites. Maybe we'll put thousands and thousands of goats along Highway 402. Start at Bob Bailey's house and work our way up to London and have a controlled experiment, opportunities for roadkill. There are all kinds of things that could happen there.

Regulation is so important. We hoped some more good ideas, again, would come out through committee, but I do see the emphasis here is going to put the weight on the shoulders of landowners. Where are the tools? Where are the techniques for landowners to better deal with these kinds of issues?

So the roads alone, I think, are one place to start with phragmites.

As I've mentioned, MPPs Bob Bailey, Jeff Yurek—Monte McNaughton has done some work on this and put forward an idea. We've just taken the common milkweed off the noxious weeds act—that's noxious; not obnoxious, by the way—so there's a vacancy. Let's characterize phragmites as a noxious weed.

I'll go back a few years ago to what I consider some success dealing with purple loosestrife. There doesn't seem to be so much of a worry now with that particular invasive plant; it was tackled at the time. There was collaboration with OFAH, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and the ministry, MNR. Crews descended on the worst concentration. Volunteers were involved. They were manually pulling them out of the ground. I obviously don't see similar initiatives with phragmites. Forget about trying to pull them out of the ground; you almost need a backhoe to get those roots out. I know that from personal experience.

Warrantless entry: I have concerns with respect to the provisions contained in this act allowing entry on land without a warrant. Obviously, I'm all for controlling these species, but I have never favoured warrantless entry in any of the pieces of environmental legislation that this government has brought forward over the last dozen years.

I can see a case to be made, and I've talked to OFAH about this, with respect to the Asian carp. You are dealing with some pretty tough cookies who bring these carp in for food. Many of them get arrested, and they pay very large fines.

So maybe we need some heavy-duty measures, but I don't want us to go overboard on the enforcement end of it; hence, the importance of prevention, promotion and education to mobilize those who know a little bit about the outdoors, to deal with so many of these plants and animals.

Again, with the trucking companies that bring in the Asian carp, my recommendation—I think the federal government has picked up on this—has always been to eviscerate the fish before they cross the border; to gut them, cut their heads off. The same applies in the United States or between states, and I have recommended that south of the border as well.

Again, I think if, say, the owner of a wetland—say it's five acres, much bigger than my pond—to what extent would they be responsible for spending thousands of dollars to remove phragmites? It's something that has to be discussed. There's obviously not a one-size-fits-all approach to this.

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The Long Point wetlands down my way are a very significant flyway for migrating waterfowl. My sister and brother-in-law have managed a duck hunting company down there for many years. My father worked for that company. I recall, going back to the 1960s, just thousands and thousands of acres of very healthy duck habitat, cattail habitat. Much of that now is being taken over by phragmites. A lot more research is needed, certainly, in that area because, you know, what are we left with? A monoculture in many cases, because this particular plant is so aggressive.

There's a lady in my riding, Janice Gilbert. She's an independent researcher, part of a phragmites working group. They advocate adding that species to the noxious weed list, as we have seen other weeds added over the years. I think MPP Yurek is doing some work on that, and MPP Monte McNaughton, who is here, pushed for adding phragmites to that list. It still hasn't happened.

The OFAH supports that group. The group has six priorities for the phragmites:

(1) A concerted effort to control along roads and agricultural drainage ditches, the municipal drains in Ontario.

(2) Proper herbicides available for over water; I have discussed that.

(3) Have the provincial government initiate and support an effective public education campaign which includes adding phragmites australis to the noxious weed list.

(4) We need sufficient dedicated funds committed from both the federal and provincial governments. We need a 10-year planning window; we have to fund 10 years of work.

(5) A locally driven effort calling on support from all three levels of government.

(6) And, overarching, we need a plan. We need a management plan for phragmites, something that would do as well for so many other species.

The periwinkle have survived the winter very well. They did a little better than the ivy on my black locust. All these species are invasive. I see all of these when I open the front door of my house. As I've made mention before, there's a beautiful, gigantic maple in front of Queen's Park when you walk out the front door. It's a Norway maple. Nothing grows underneath it other than a bit of grass. It's an invasive species, and there's one probably just a hundred feet from the front door here.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Let's get a chainsaw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think maybe we could deal with that, but that would be very politically hard to do. But, you know, in the ravines in Toronto there are millions and millions of Norway maple, and again, something could be done about that.

The damage that we're talking about here is not just ecological; it's financial. Estimates are that invasive alien species have a \$7.5-billion impact on our forest industry and on agriculture. The impact on ecosystems, as we've been discussing, is often not only severe but irreversible, and could be responsible for as much as 24% of the decline of species at risk across Canada.

I wanted to talk about so many of the plants. Plants can be boring for some people, but they don't get the attention that they should—obviously a very important part of so many species' food chains. I did mention Asian carp. It's become a bit of a media star over the last few years: the Asians, the silvers, that jump out of streams when there's vibration or noise, say, from an outdoor motor. Again, if those things ever got into the Great Lakes, that would be devastating. I'm not necessarily worried about killer whales getting into Lake Erie. I don't think that's going to be an issue. We spend so much time talking about killer whales, but of course—the Mississippi River and the Missouri system. What kind of impact would that have on Ontario's \$7-billion sport fishing industry, let alone our commercial fishing—that's a \$234-million industry—our tourism industry, our restaurant industry? At so many of the great restaurants along Lake Erie, for example, you can get some fantastic perch dinners; certainly, if you go into towns like Port Dover and Port Stanley—and the Lancaster perch down in eastern Ontario.

Again, I talked about gutting Asian carp as they come in. The federal government has taken the initiative on this. I thought maybe in Ontario we would see a bigger push from the province. Much of the concern is the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. There's a multi-billion dollar proposal to deal with that. It's almost politically not possible and would take decades to accomplish, but I certainly laud the American people and their federal government for the initiatives they've taken on that. They are making some changes just downstream from Chicago and improving their technology as far as experimenting beyond electrocution and dealing with any movement of these fish north, up into Lake Michigan.

Another real area of concern was Eagle Marsh, near Fort Wayne, Indiana, which was kind of a link between the Mississippi watershed and the Great Lakes watershed. They did have a steel-link fence there, which really wasn't effective, and they now, as I understand it, have dredged or built a berm separating the two waterways. They built an earthen berm across that marsh. I certainly give the United States credit for going beyond rules and regulations and putting some money in and taking some direct action that benefits all of us on this side of the border.

So there are, obviously, some signs of progress. The private sector has kicked in. Commercial fishermen Illinois—way have removed something like three million pounds of Asian carp over the last five years. That's a short-term measure, obviously.

I like to think that there are some chefs—I talked to people down in Louisiana, at these fantastic restaurants in Baton Rouge. They can cook just about anything that comes out of the water, and there's some potential for them to put Asian carp on the dinner plate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was listening and trying to make some notes and trying to do some research at the same time, listening very intently to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

He talked about the emerald ash borer. I've mentioned previously in this House that we in Windsor and Essex county were hit particularly hard. We warned other communities in Ontario that this thing was coming, and indeed, it is spreading to the ash trees right across the province. We had beautiful, tree-lined boulevards—unfortunately, ash trees. We had a lot of ash trees around our public parks. If you think of the damage that a dead tree—because these trees certainly die; in a windstorm or if anything hits them, they come down. They come down on houses and vehicles. We were really nervous, especially around the sports fields, that there would be children playing out there or walking down the sidewalk and the trees would come down. So our municipality spent millions of dollars taking these trees down before something really bad happened.

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The thing about losing a tree: Trees are the lungs of the earth. They clean our air. When you live in a community, as I do, where the prevailing winds blow all that pollution from the coal-burning power plants in the American states that border the Great Lakes, we need all the lungs that we can get, all the trees that we can plant and replant to make up for all the ash trees that we lost. It got very expensive for us.

It's the same with phragmites now. People look at the phragmites, and they think it's the tall prairie grasses that used to be all over Ontario. But no, it's an invasive species. People actually use it as a decorative grass in their backyard. They don't know it's going to take over the entire backyard. We have to always keep an eye on such things, Speaker.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the members who spoke before me, the members from Haldimand-Norfolk and Windsor-Tecumseh.

I want to tell you that I'm really pleased to stand up today and speak about Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I think this is a very important piece of legislation for our environment and also for our future. What it does is, it allows the province to take an active role in now stopping new invasive species from taking hold in our province.

This is really about protecting our plant life and our environment and making sure that it's there for our children and for generations to come. This bill addresses the serious threat of invasive species and how they influence and impact our province's economy and our natural environment.

If passed, this bit of legislation would make Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada—think about it, the first jurisdiction in Canada—with stand-alone invasive species legislation. This will make our province and the residents in this province really the leaders when it comes to protecting our environment from invasive species. I think this is exactly the kind of role that our province should be taking.

Invasive species, as you all know, impact the lives of everyone in Ontario. In my riding of Halton, it's really the phragmites that you can see. When you drive down any country road—and you're nodding your head, so I know you know this—you can see them cropping up everywhere. They're not just cropping up; they are actually choking out the rest of the plant life in the area, and they are growing to be huge. They are towering over me and over all the other plant life around.

Invasive species, as we all know, cost Ontario tens of millions of dollars a year. We can't afford this, and our children can't afford this. This legislation will give our province the power to intervene early and ensure that invasive species don't take hold in our countryside and in our environment. I think this is an extremely important piece of legislation that will benefit our environment, our society and our children for years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I want to rise and comment on the member for Haldimand-Norfolk's comments about invasive species, whether it's the Asian carp or any of the other invasive species that we're certainly concerned about here in Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The Liberal government is an invasive species.

Mr. Robert Bailey: My colleague here has got some other comments about some invasive species, but I won't add to that.

The phragmites issue: I know I have to deal with it. There's a lot of it, as the member from Haldimand-Norfolk said, in southwestern Ontario. All you have to do is travel the 401 or any of the 400-series highways and you can see it there. We have a pond in behind our

backyard, and it's quite prevalent there along both shores of the pond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You've got to get a goat.

Mr. Robert Bailey: So I'm going to take the advice of the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I've got a goat already lined up. I've talked to a buddy of mine, and he's going to lend me a goat. But I was also advised by other people who know agriculture very well—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just get Dion Phaneuf and Phil Kessel. We'll make goats out of them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Ha, yes.

They said, "Make sure you get a female goat; don't get a billy goat, because the people uptown will know you've got a goat." Apparently, there's a certain odour about them, and it's quite prevalent. So anyway, we're going to try this goat. This is probably the first my wife has heard about it, if she's watching today. But anyway, I do intend to move forward with this goat process that Mr. Barrett has told me about.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You can eat it after.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, the member from Elgin says we can also eat the goat, but I won't go that far.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let's not go that far.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I wouldn't go that far.

But anyway, I do have a property where I could keep this goat. If it would work, it might be something really worth—sometimes the simplest—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes—it might be the simplest process going forward. It's something that we could try. I think anything is worth trying. I also intend to try the painting with the roller brush that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk spoke about.

Anyway, with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I'm certainly glad that he wasn't "goated" into saying something that perhaps he shouldn't have.

Further questions and comments? The member from Welland.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Welland?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Niagara Falls. That was a pretty bad joke, too, Mr. Speaker. I just throw that out there.

In my riding of Niagara Falls we have the St. Lawrence Seaway, where the ships come down. The zebra mussels can hitch a ride on them. Billions and billions of dollars are going through that seaway every year. If you take a look at what's going on in Niagara, not only that, you have the tourists who go there to watch the ships go through the locks. So this is a very, very important issue for Niagara. It's certainly a very important issue—and then the jobs that go with it, because there are people who work at the seaway who are taking care of that.

But the one thing that I haven't heard anybody talk about is what's going on with the municipalities. It is costing municipalities, because of invasive species, \$75 million to \$90 million a year to manage this, and that's

something that I think we have to talk about. We have to say: How do we make sure that we're not downloading that onto municipalities?

I was a city councillor in Niagara Falls. How many here have been city councillors? I'm sure there are quite a few. We all know where we want to spend our money because you want to make sure you're getting your picture in the paper and all that kind of stuff, but the reality is, what we have to make sure gets taken care of, which isn't so sexy, is the pipes. What happens is, the zebra mussels, when they go through, they start multiplying. How many know that they multiply pretty quickly? They're just like rabbits; really. They just continue to multiply and multiply—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Absolutely. What happens is, they end up clogging up the pipes—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This is a family show.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is a family show.

But the reality is, that's what is happening. So when you take a look at this bill, we have to make sure that you're going to put the resources in place to make sure the municipality isn't the one—and the taxpayers of the province of Ontario—that is going to have to pay for it, because the municipalities don't have the resources to pay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for his final comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. Very good input from the elected members in the House, and quite valuable input from the scientific personnel that work for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. I understand that was much of the basis for this legislation. There's a wealth of knowledge within anglers, hunters, people who are out in the outdoors—

Interjection: Trappers.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —farmers, naturalists, trappers, commercial fishermen and the associations that represent them. We have to encourage these people to come out to committee. It's so important that we come up with an approach that's not merely reactive—that deals with the species after the damage has been done. We have that with the sea lamprey. We continue to deal with the sea lamprey, and that's an expensive approach. With Asian carp, there's an opportunity, in Ontario and Canada, to take a preventive approach. It's easier and it's a lot less costly to deal with some of these problems before they happen.

The legislation—and I'm not sure that a scientific approach is necessarily evident in this bill with respect to any decision-making or risk assessment. I'm concerned about the red tape that will inevitably come along with this legislation, and that would hamper prevention. I'm concerned about the downloading of responsibility for implementation onto landowners themselves. There goes the incentive for landowners to act. This could end up being quite unfair and punitive for people who own land and end up with some of these plants or animals.

I reiterate my opposition to warrantless entry.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good afternoon. It's always a joy being in here, whatever the debate is. We always find a way to make light out of some of the serious debate. We always find an opportunity to smile. When I look to my friends across the way and to my neighbours here to the right, we always seem to smile about issues.

But today I'm very pleased to once again stand up on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin and speak to Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species. The act itself will cover identification of invasive species and carriers, prohibited activities, and authorizations and agreements, along with special preventive measures, inspections, inspection orders, actions by the minister, enforcements, offences and penalties, and other miscellaneous items that are going to be discussed.

I'm looking forward this Friday to meeting up with a group out of my riding along the north shore, which is the North Channel Marine Tourism Council. We're going to be talking about challenges within their industry. I'm sure invasive species are going to come up, so I'm really enjoying the debate that we're having here this afternoon. I can bring some of those views and those points at that meeting while we're sitting down.

I remember last year one of the biggest issues that they raised was the Eurasian water-milfoil. Basically it's a very long weed, sometimes as long as 20 to 30 feet long, and what it does is it provides a large canopy. It takes away the oxygen levels within the waters, and you find it very much populated along the shorelines, so when the boats come in, it chokes up their propellers, it ties into their trailers and just creates a very difficult environment, particularly in the marinas. They've been looking for years in regard to how they can remove those. There was a kind of water lawn mower that was used.

I'm actually looking to meet up with the group on Friday, because there was a test piece of machinery that was used in the agricultural sector. What people were doing is they were just mulching and rolling over the bottom in the low waters, just eating it up. As you're pulling it out, you can dry it, and they've actually used it in other circumstances in the agricultural sector, which benefits their area. I'm looking forward to actually sitting down and meeting up with them, because I think it was actually used in—I'm looking at my friend across the way in London? Essex?

Interjections: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I think it was a gentleman from your area who actually brought the idea to the meeting last year. I'm looking forward to getting an update on how they're utilizing it.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin borders the Great Lakes. As well, it hosts a large number of provincial parks, protected conservancy lands and forestry areas. Those who live in these rural areas can tell you how many of these invasive species are having disastrous impacts on our region, across the province and beyond.

As the first stand-alone act to deal with invasive species in Canada, we are encouraged to see these issues dealt with first here in this Legislature. Currently, as we know, invasive species are dealt with in sometimes disjointed groups of 20 different federal and provincial acts, which I can imagine would be difficult to navigate through. This bill now consolidates the provincial side into one act under one ministry.

This sounds reasonable to me. It's something that a lot of individuals have been asking for, particularly within the marinas and particularly with other groups, because I've found in the past when dealing with MNR that you discuss a particular challenge—I'll use one that's quite familiar to me, which is the walleye fish habitat rehabilitation program that is going on on Manitoulin Island, which I dealt with a couple of years ago with a group who were looking at establishing this program in Kagawong.

The problem we were having was trying to move the project forward. We were dealing particularly with MNR on one particular issue. However, MNR being the left hand and MOE being the right hand, we found that they weren't talking to each other. Whereas MNR can sometimes make certain decisions, they always like the comfort and agreement of MOE to back up that decision. However, it doesn't prevent the project from going forward or the MNR to make that decision. With this particular walleye project, we were challenged and found it difficult to move the project forward because the left hand wasn't talking to the right hand.

The best way to deal with this, in my experience, is to bring both hands together to find out what they're saying. It was very nice to see that, when you sit them down both together, you find out where the confusion lies. Once you got both hands joined together, the project was successful. We got it moving forward. The walleye project has been a success for the last two years, from what I understand.

It just goes to show you that all these different ministries need a collaborative way to talk to each other so that we always know what one hand is doing as well as the other, so that we can benefit the organizations and the communities and the municipalities so they can move their projects forward.

We can go on and on to talk about dredging programs or the shoreline programs as well. It doesn't have to stop just with this piece of legislation—where we can consolidate certain issues so that we can deal with one particular act to move issues forward.

This bill will now consolidate the provincial side into one act under the ministry. The bill will allow the government to ban the possession, sale, transportation etc. of invasive species designated as a significant threat. It would allow the government to respond quickly when invasive species are spotted, and it would give the government inspection and enforcement powers when something is prescribed as a likely host and facilitator of an invasive species.

That has to be backed up with resources as well. It is so easy. I have talked with my friends across the way in

regard to the difficulties that certain ministries are having because now they are facing cuts. If we're not going to put the resources out there and target the funding that is going to be required, we're going to be challenged in order to meet whatever proposal or whatever legislation or whatever course of action is going to come out of this bill. This needs to be backed up by a concrete plan and resources and individuals, not the firing and laying off of individuals. We're actually going to have to hire individuals to go in and do the surveys, go out and do the testing, go out and make sure that we monitor and apply and charge individuals that are actually found to contravene this act.

I think we can all agree that this bill is needed. However, we need to know what the actual regulations will look like. We need to make sure the act has real teeth.

I had some great discussions last night with the group who had the wild game and fish reception and met with many friends from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Canadian Sporting Arms and Ammunition Association and the Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association. Again, great organizations who have these particular issues at heart because a lot of them rely on these resources for their members, to make sure that the businesses and the boating institutions, the boating associations—the channels are open so that we can attract those very-much-needed dollars to our economies through tourism in northern Ontario and across this province.

Really, it's through lobby days like this that provide many of us with a face-to-face opportunity to hear from them about these and other issues. We share many of the same concerns. While everyone is in general support of this bill, we want to make sure that we get it right.

This is a bill to start towards a solution and a strategy to deal with invasive species. I am fortunate enough to have the largest freshwater island in the world in my backyard, which is Manitoulin Island. I don't know if many of you knew that. It is. It is a gem. It is a diamond, and some of these invasive species are putting a little tarnish on that gem. So we need to take the right course of action right away so that we can deal with it.

Manitoulin Island hosts one of the most biodiverse areas in the Great Lakes. Manitoulin Island is unique in many ways. As I said, it is the world's largest freshwater island. It has more than 100 inland lakes between its shores, and many of those lakes have islands on them as well.

1650

There are more than two dozen small settlements, First Nations and towns spread across more than 160 kilometres of boreal forest, lakes, rivers, shorelines, escarpments, meadows and alvars. Many people here and at home watching have travelled to Manitoulin Island and know what I'm talking about. The island is a beacon for hikers, cyclists, anglers and hunters, and everyone in between.

This gives me a great opportunity to talk about our wonderful Owen Sound transportation system, the Chi-

Cheemaun, which will be welcoming a lot of individuals to the island. I see my friend across the way, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I take my hat off to him for having worked with me and my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on the delivery and the issues that we were challenged with with the Chi-Cheemaun last year. Having that operate brings \$40 million to the island. That's the impact that it means. The prompt action that we took in order to get the repairs done so that the boat can safely dock on the island—again, I've always been one to give flowers where flowers are deserved, and you certainly deserve a flower there, my friend.

It seems as though invasive species have also come to the island over the years and are unfortunately causing grave concerns for people and organizations there. There are several groups on the island that are doing a lot of great work. Last night, I met with OFAH, which is one of the groups that have done really great work, making invasive species a priority in some of the work they do. Over the past several years, they have been funding an invasive species awareness liaison for Manitoulin Island to work in partnership with the Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council.

Last summer—this is key—Eric Labelle was hired through the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters as an invasive species awareness liaison for Manitoulin Island. Mr. Labelle was a Fleming College graduate who had taken both the outdoor adventure skills and earth resources technician programs, and was returning to achieve his environmental technician diploma.

Born and raised on Manitoulin Island, he was one of the lucky residents who could take advantage of the many outdoor activities the island offers. In enjoying these outdoor activities, Eric understood the importance of preserving our natural environment from invasive species for those of us enjoying the outdoors and wildlife now and for our future generations.

As part of OFAH's Invading Species Hit Squad on Manitoulin, it was Eric's main goal to facilitate the awareness of invading species across Manitoulin Island, as well as inform the public on steps to take in order to mitigate the further reproduction and spread of these species.

As Eric is the expert here, I am not even going to try to take some of his quotes. What I would like to do is read from his very excellent and detailed document that he produced, which is called Summary of Invasive Species Outreach and Monitoring Activities Conducted on Manitoulin Island, by Eric Labelle, under the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, from June 16 to August 29, 2014, in co-operation with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and the Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's a heck of a title.

Mr. Michael Mantha: He's done his work. Like I said, there's no point in me trying to take some of it. I thought it was important enough—and I hope I have enough time to read it into the record.

He starts with his introduction. It says:

"Since 1992 the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, were able to establish an Invading Species Awareness Program ... to address the ever-increasing threat posed by the growing number of invading species in Ontario. I am fortunate to have been able to participate in this program for the summer of 2014 and to continue the efforts established by the Invading Species Awareness Program. It has been my pleasure to inform the public on invasive species and their effect on our natural environment here on Manitoulin Island as well as facilitating identification, mitigation, and proper reporting techniques.

"The population of Manitoulin Island is approximately 12,600 people. However, this number increases by more than a quarter during the summer months as we are hosts to many seasonal residences. Around 200,000 people visit this island during this time, providing an excellent opportunity to inform the public not only from Manitoulin Island but from many places around the world on the hot topic that is invasive species.

"There is a dire need to present a strong message to the public on the effects of these species and to put forth ways to stop or mitigate them in order to preserve the unique biodiversity of Manitoulin. Being bordered by Lake Huron, now host to over 185 invasive species, Manitoulin Island is facing serious environmental threat. Visitors to the island are still traversing to inland lakes without the knowledge of cleaning and draining their boats. Live bait is still being dumped in the water bodies, causing potential risk of introducing new and potentially harmful species. Firewood is still being brought to Manitoulin and subsequently off the island, even with the presence of the emerald ash borer," which we talked about earlier, my friend. "The time to spread this message is now, and through this Invading Species Awareness Program I aimed to do just that."

Then he talked about this training that he received. "To be successful in this position, it was imperative to attend a two-day training session offered by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. It was conducted in the fishing heritage centre on June 5 and 6, 2014. All of their presentations and workshops provided me with a much greater in-depth knowledge base on invasive species. This workshop covered such things as identification, monitoring, reporting, prevention and mitigation efforts. The use of the EDDMapS," the "Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System, program was well-presented as a useful tool for ourselves to use and to encourage the public to get involved in the reporting of invasive species. Useful training in workplace safety and workplace discrimination and harassment policies was also given. In completion of this training workshop, each of the students were given the tools needed to complete the work term, such as a wealth of species information material, samples and data containing all pertinent information to successfully complete all invasive species awareness initiatives."

Wow. There's a lot here to say but I just want to get to his conclusion. I wish I had more time, but it seems like my time is being eaten up quite quickly. So I'll go to his conclusion from the report that he had presented.

Again, I would encourage you to look up the name. His name is Eric Labelle. His report that he put out is quite impressive. He has got a very nice invasive-species layout of identifying what those actual species look like. Very well laid out, thought out; a great piece of literature, very worthwhile to read. He has been published in many of the island papers and along Georgian Bay as well—a young man who is going places and who is quite knowledgeable through being provided with the opportunity to learn.

His report conclusion is, "It was a tremendous opportunity to be part of this Invading Species Awareness Program this summer. All of the learning opportunities presented through this occupation will only aid in elaborating on many skills. Gaining experience in media exposure and public speaking, a particular weak point of mine, became a positive experience and it was a chance for me to work on this skills set.

"The knowledge gained on invasive species throughout has only enforced the need for the preservation of our natural environment and has brought forth a very important ecological concern. It is my hope that this program continues to raise awareness on invading species in Ontario and that awareness turns to actions from the public and it will stop the spread of these species.

"All of the outreach initiatives I have undertaken have all been met with positive, and eye-opening, feedback. Therefore, one can conclude that people are willing to take necessary action, such as boat cleaning and draining, not moving firewood, not dumping their bait buckets, and to look before they leave, to prevent the spread of invasive species.

"Future outreach activities could concentrate more around media exposure through print, social, radio and television outreach. It would increase the number of people that would be exposed to this information. Continuing to deliver information to resorts, tent and trailer parks, motels, parks ... are great for making the information accessible to the tourism public. All in all, the summer work term went very well."

He goes on to thank a couple of individuals from Manitoulin Island. Special thanks go "to Seija Deschenes, Manitoulin Streams, and the Manitoulin Area Stewardship Council for having me this summer. Thank you to Susanne Meert and Calvin Crispo for working with me and helping to make this a very successful experience. As well, thank you to Alison Kirkpatrick and Matt Smith for all their support."

1700

There is an opportunity to learn from this whole bill. We've already seen a young man who has learned from it. We need to challenge ourselves to learn from it. I'll be looking forward to seeing this bill into committee so that we can have further discussion on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: If Ontarians were watching this debate this afternoon, they would see this Legislature at its very best. There have been several thoughtful speeches delivered this afternoon, both from members of the opposition and the third party. The speech that was just delivered by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was a very thoughtful, very well-constructed speech.

This is a very serious issue. My riding of Peterborough, the city of Peterborough, is right in the middle of the Trent Severn system. Over the years, we've had the milfoil weed, which was an invasive species that spread into the Kawartha Lakes and damaged the habitat of pickerel and large-mouth bass, and other recreational fishing opportunities within the Trent Severn system.

But it's interesting. The member from Windsor-Tecumseh talked about the emerald ash borer. It got into Canada because the emerald ash borer was embedded in pallets which came in through Michigan into Windsor and then cut a swath—Mr. Speaker, as you'd know, your predecessor, Pat Hoy, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, actually showed us pictures that were taken by MNR. You could see the track of the emerald ash borer from Detroit into Windsor through to Leamington and Chatham-Kent-Essex. From those aerial photos, it was like an army marching from west to east, with the destruction that it left in its wake.

I know that decades ago in Ontario, Dutch elm disease destroyed all of the stately elms in many big cities and smaller communities right across Ontario.

The other one, which is interesting enough when you talk about shrubs or bushes used for landscaping and ornamental purposes, is the purple loosestrife. That was really an interesting one, because it was an invasive species, but if you went to landscape supply businesses, they were recommending it. You know, you put a nice front on your house with the dimensional stone and the evergreen bushes and all the other plants. That was an invasive species that everybody was using.

So the member delivered a very eloquent address to the Legislature this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to follow and comment on the member from Algoma-Manitoulin—is that the right order: Algoma-Manitoulin?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A beautiful area up there. I have a constituent who does aquaculture up there and has his cages on Manitoulin Island. Every day, they ship fish to St. Thomas to be processed, where his home plant is. I find that's pretty neat, that you can travel that far daily, even throughout the winter. I've been invited to come visit up there, so I think I might be up there sometime in the next month or two to take a look and hopefully see the beautiful scenery that's up in Manitoulin Island and area. I look forward to seeing it.

However, I'll just go back to my main point. I have yet to hear the government speak about maybe changing this bill a bit to deal with prevention of invasive species

entering Ontario. They talked lots today about the cost of dealing with invasive species. This bill sets it up to still accept invasive species and deal with it, so all they are doing is identifying them quicker, but they are still going to be spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year to deal with invasive species. Why not take a step back and try to have a prevention program like New Zealand, which has an excellent program that prevents invasive species from entering the marketplace? I think, at the end of the day, that would save our environment, it would save a heck of a lot of money for this government in dealing with invasive species, and I think it would put a lot of people's minds at rest worrying about invasive species and how they get into our province.

Hopefully, the government will see fit to start listening to the opposition on a few ideas. We do have ideas that make sense. We're shut out quite a bit, because that's the nature of this business. The majority rules. However, I think the people of this province would like to actually see them work with us in making things better and looking at the ideas that we have going forward with the Invasive Species Act. It's a good time to start listening to the PC Party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I actually prepared a 20-minute speech.

I want to get on the record something that I think is important, because I think we all understand that we have to do something here. This bill enables you to appoint inspectors to make sure invasive species aren't entering the province of Ontario. Does that mean you'll be hiring new staff? Asking the Ministry of Natural Resources staff to take this on—what will happen with that? You say you're going to make these positions exist on one hand, but—here's the concern that I have, and I want my colleagues to listen to this—they want to cut the Ministry of Natural Resources budget by 6% on the other hand. Here's what happens when you do that. Will you be laying off employees and then asking those who are left to pick up the slack? We know what happens. We've seen that happen in other situations.

If you're asking for an answer to the questions that I'm raising right now, you won't find them in the bill, and that's a concern for me. You may find it around the Liberal cabinet table, and that's fair, or you may find it at the minister's headquarters, but you won't find it in the bill or at any committee around the bill, and that's a concern.

Debating what we have in front of us here: Do we support moving to ban invasive species from Ontario? The answer is easy. I think everybody here can say it: Absolutely. Do we support the stakeholders who are calling for this? Absolutely. Of course. Can we be sure how this will look when it's implemented? Absolutely the answer is no, and that's a big concern.

When I look back at what has been quoted before—"The minister may appoint or designate persons or classes of persons as enforcement officers for the

purposes of this act"—here's the problem: a 6% cut at the ministry that will be overseeing this. Somehow the minister is going to be able to create jobs for people to stop invasive species entering the province.

My time is up; I realize that. I've got a few more things to say, but I'll speak again. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I was glad that my colleague brought up the purple loosestrife plan. My family and I go to New Brunswick every year, and for the longest time I'd say, "What a beautiful-looking plant on the side of the road. It's great." And then my in-laws would say, "Tracy, it's invasive." It causes harm. It saps nutrients to birds and wildlife. It degrades the soil and just makes it very difficult for all living things. But it is, as the minister said, a very good-looking plant.

I was listening to the debate from the PC member and the NDP member. When I look at the legislation, I think it does speak to some of their concerns. It says that it will provide a strong legislative framework to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species, and provide help by giving provisions to intervene earlier so that some of the species we don't want to come to Ontario don't get here. It will give us tools to prohibit activities such as possessing and transporting certain species. It has some other elements, as well, that are quite strong.

I always go back to, why this legislation? As I think one of the other members opposite said, it really brings together a patchwork of different pieces of legislation federally and provincially. If passed, this would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada, which is fantastic. That's really something for us to be proud of. It would complement the work of the federal government in this arena as well and really promote our joint accountability to all levels of government to manage invasive species.

I'm on the learning curve; I get the purple loosestrife thing now.

I'm looking forward to seeing this legislation pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his final wrap-up.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always nice to come into the House when you prepare yourself to give what you think is a passionate speech, something that you firmly believe in and something that's important to you—and I noticed that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs paid very much attention to pretty much each and every word that I put out there, and it was reflective in your comments. I do thank you for listening to the words that I offered.

1710

To the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London: Bring your rod when you come to Manitoulin Island. There are a lot of good camping areas there and we will welcome every dollar that you bring to the area, so you come on up. Bring your family and friends.

To my friend from Niagara Falls: Enforcement and funding is going to be key in this particular bill; you're absolutely right. It's something that I raised in my comments.

And to the Minister for Children and Youth Services and women's issues: You mentioned the word "will"; "will implement." My reflection on the bill and what I've read is, I've seen the word "may" a lot more than the word "will." In order to do things, I need to see a little bit more directive in this bill, which is why I'm looking forward to having it go to committee and to having those discussions.

The one thing I do want to put out is in regards to the EDDMapS that are out there: Go look them up. It's a tool that we could all use to detect and prevent the distribution of invasive species. It's available to you. Again, look up the name Eric Labelle, Invasive Species. It's a report that he provided under the Invasive Species Awareness Program, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and Manitoulin Area Stewardship.

The last thing I want to stop on is to actually mention what stop is. To stop invasive species: inspect your boat; drain your motor and your water; empty your bait bucket; wash and dry your boat and equipment; rinse your boat; spray your boat and dry your boat. Doing those steps will help to maintain a lot of our lakes and our shores that we have here.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for providing me the extra time. I'm just testing your patience to see how long you're going to let me you go on for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —but now I'm going to sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: When this bill was first introduced, I had the honour and pleasure to speak at Queen's University in associate professor Shelley Arnott's class on aquatic invertebrates and ecosystems. Shelley's area of specialty is the invasive species spiny water flea, which reduces crustacean diversity, which impacts fish growth.

I have to say that I agree with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs 100% when he speaks of this being the time when the House is at its best, when we can all agree on the legislation we have before us.

Invasive species typically adapt and easily reproduce. This is the nature of the problem that we're dealing with. They tend to compete with native species of animals and plants for food and/or habitat and, in doing so, interrupt the ecological balance. They can cause physical damage to property and they can affect local economies.

I have to backtrack here a minute and say that I'm sharing my time with the member—sorry—from Barrie, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, and the member from Brampton–Springdale. My apologies.

To get back to the matter at hand: Invasive species can be introduced accidentally, as has already been mentioned, or on occasion purposely introduced for pest control. One example is escaped pets, such as Burmese pythons in the Florida Everglades, which now threaten local bird species.

Closer to home, the Asian carp is an imminent threat to the Great Lakes. Introduced as a food species in the southern US, they now have infested the entire Mississippi basin. Being voracious eaters of plankton, the basis of the aquatic food chain, they pose a considerable threat to our fisheries, which is a \$2.2-billion industry in Ontario. Asian carp eat 120% of their body weight each day. It has been estimated that just 10 males and 10 females would be enough to gain a foothold.

Invasive species already cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year, putting resource-based jobs in fisheries, forestry and agriculture, and in tourism, at risk. The total cost to Ontario for invasive species prevention, management, mitigation and associated research is unknown. There are several figures, however, that are available that illustrate the considerable economic impacts.

Zebra mussels, as has already been stated, cost Ontario up to \$91 million a year. The city of Toronto estimates that it has spent at least \$37 million over the last five years to replace city-owned trees killed by the emerald ash borer. The mountain pine beetle in western Canada has cost billions in lost revenue.

In the Kingston area, there have been growing reports that zebra mussels, round goby and garlic mustard are a growing problem. Round goby is an aggressive predator of fish eggs, contributing to the decline of many valuable sport fish populations. Garlic mustard, an aggressive invader of wooded areas, has become very prominent in Kingston, shading out native flora and inhibiting seed germination of other species.

The serious threat of invasive species must be addressed. The preceding legislation is a patchwork of more than 20 federal and provincial acts, none of which are designed to deal with invasive species specifically.

On November 5, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry reintroduced the Invasive Species Act to help address these legislative gaps. If passed, the legislation would provide a strong legislative framework to better prevent, detect, rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species. The act would give Ontario the tools to ban activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species. It would allow the government to intervene earlier and enable rapid response actions to address urgent threats, including working with partners to stop an invasive species from spreading—for example, by preventing the movement of contaminated firewood. It would also help promote compliance through inspection and enforcement measures.

Managing invasive species has always been a collaborative effort with all levels of government, industry, environmental groups and the public. If passed, the act would also work to expand on the use of strategic

partnerships to tackle this issue collectively. Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I recognize the member from Barrie in continuation of the debate.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: With the reintroduction of our proposed legislation, Ontario is taking strong action to address the ecological and economic threats that invasive species pose to our natural environment.

The proposed Invasive Species Act was originally introduced in the Legislature in February of this year. The reintroduced bill remains the same except for one update to reflect the ministry's recent change to the name Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will be the only jurisdiction in Canada that has stand-alone invasive species legislation. Invasive species such as zebra mussels and emerald ash borer cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year. Others, such as Asian carp, have the potential to do long-lasting damage to our economic and environmental systems, such as significantly impacting our \$2.2-billion recreational fishing industry here in Ontario.

I know my colleague from Trinity–Spadina would be very upset by that. He comes to my riding to fish in Little Lake. I think it's quite hilarious that he comes to Little Lake because most of the people who live in my riding don't even know we have Little Lake. They only know about Lake Simcoe.

Mr. Han Dong: A beautiful lake.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's a beautiful lake. That's right.

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established in Ontario is critical to our fight against this growing threat. The goal of our proposed invasive species legislation is to support the prevention, the early detection, the rapid response to and the eradication of invasive species in this province. With the reintroduction of our proposed legislation, we're taking strong action to address the ecological and economic threats that invasive species pose to our natural environment.

I'm going to quote an article here. My colleague from Kingston and the Islands did touch upon it, but I'm just going to read a little bit from an article in a Florida newspaper:

"The exotic pet trade has a way of introducing destructive and potentially dangerous creatures to places in which they don't belong, and Florida's sunny, warm climate makes for a perfect home for many of these invasive species." Unfortunately, Ontario can be home to many invasive species as well.

1720

"People buy a small snake, lizard, or colorful fish, and when it gets too big to handle, they dump it in an area in which they figure it will fit in. But if these unleashed creatures fit in too well, they not only thrive in their new homes—but without natural predators they can wreak havoc on the surrounding ecosystem, unbalancing it and potentially wiping out the native animals.

"Lately we've heard a lot about the Burmese pythons and the more aggressive African rock pythons that wildlife officials fear will wipe out the foxes, rabbits, deer, raccoons, opossums, and bobcats of the Everglades."

Who thought we'd ever have opossums? I have one in my backyard. Who ever thought that they would come that far north? It has lived through three winters already.

"Thousands are thought to be loose in parts of the state, but they have recently begun to appear" in other areas, too.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Ann, you can't read from your BlackBerry.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Oh, sorry.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes, I recognize the member.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I understand the rules of the chamber say that we are not allowed to read from our electronic devices, and I believe that is what the member from Barrie has been doing during her debate time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. You're absolutely correct; that is a point of order. Yes, I would remind the member from Barrie that you're not to refer to handheld devices.

Mr. Han Dong: She wasn't reading. You're playing with a tablet there.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Yes, exactly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continue on, please. Thank you.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: If the proposed legislation is passed, and I urge members to support this bill, we will become the first jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive species legislation. I think this is very important for the future of our recreational economy and for our agricultural economy as well. I urge you to support this bill. We do not want a mess such as in southern Florida, where pythons are breeding so quickly that there's no way, even with bounties on them, to keep control of them, and giant lizards are eating all of the natural wildlife. I urge you to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Brampton–Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

In this proposed legislation, the government is taking action to address the serious threat of invasive species to Ontario's economy and to our natural environment. In February, our government first introduced the proposed Invasive Species Act and reintroduced this proposed legislation on November 5, 2014. If the proposed legislation is passed, Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive species legislation.

Invasive species impact the lives of every Ontarian and cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year. They put resource-based jobs at risk; for example, the forest industry, the commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism and agriculture.

Impacts that are already existing in Ontario from these species include the zebra mussels that clog the intake

pipes of municipal water pipes and hydroelectric companies. They also interfere with the enjoyment of our lakes and our rivers. This can cost us anywhere from \$75 million to \$91 million every year to manage.

Another is ruffe. They can seriously damage native sport fish populations such as yellow perch by directly competing for food or habitat or through heavy predation of native sport fish eggs. Ruffe can very quickly become the most dominant fish in local areas because of their rapid reproductive and growth rates. This puts pressure on the native species and contributes to their decline. Given time, they have the potential to spread to all of the Great Lakes and many inland waters as well.

The emerald ash borer: The emerald ash borer was first found in Canada in Windsor, Ontario, in 2002. Since then, the beetle has spread across much of southwestern Ontario, including Sault Ste. Marie and the Ottawa area. Once infested, the mortality of ash trees is nearly 100%. Ontario municipalities have spent over \$71 million on managing the beetle and plan to spend an additional \$284 million over the next 10 years. The beetle is a significant threat to our forestry industry.

Another one is the Asian long-horned beetle, an invasive forest pest with no natural enemies in North America that attacks nearly all broadleaf trees, with native maples being the preferred host. A potential decline in hardwood broadleaf trees could have major consequences for Ontario's wildlife and biodiversity, negatively affecting future generations.

Impacts from species that are not yet in Ontario are also a possibility. The mountain pine beetle, which is in western Canada, is an insect responsible for destroying millions of hectares of pine trees in British Columbia. There's an increased risk of large fires with dead and dying trees creating a landscape of highly flammable stems. There's also a loss of wildlife habitat, and it degrades the overall visual quality of our forests.

The Asian carp, which is in the United States, has migrated through US waterways towards the Great Lakes. Asian carp prefer cool to moderate water temperatures like those found near the shores of the Great Lakes. If Asian carp become established in Ontario waters, they could potentially eat the food supply that our native fish depend on and crowd them out of their habitat. The decline of native fish species could damage sport and commercial fishing in Ontario, which brings millions of dollars a year into the province's economy.

We need this legislation, and our government encourages everyone to support this legislation. Currently, there's a patchwork of more than 20 federal and provincial acts, none designed specifically to deal with invasive species. For example, the Canada Shipping Act, which is a federal act, manages the discharge of ballast waters; the Plant Diseases Act, which is provincial, bans the transport and sale of diseased plants, which would include an invasive insect or pathogen; and then there's the Public Lands Act, which is provincial and allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines.

The proposed legislation would help address legislative gaps, as none of these laws was designed specifically

to address invasive species. If passed, the Invasive Species Act would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing the debate, I recognize the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act.

Anyone who travels into Canada knows that when they arrive at the airport or at a port of entry, they are asked a series of questions: "Were you on a farm when you were abroad? Are you bringing any plant materials, any meat or any other agricultural products in?" So we're all used to the concept that we have strong laws, that when people try to import organic products into this country, they have controls over that, because the impacts of that could be severe: on agriculture, on our economy and on our ecology. But yet we don't have a sufficient framework right now to deal with some of the other invaders that might be brought in, not necessarily even by individuals coming into the country, but that will latch onto ships or onto containers or into products that are imported commercially into this country.

As a number of my colleagues have mentioned, we have species like zebra mussels that come to this country on the sides of ships. We have the Asian long-horned beetle that came in on wooden pallets of industrial products being imported into this country. When these and other species arrive here, the impacts that they can have on Ontario—on our ecology, on our economy, on our agriculture and on our forestry—are severe. As has been recounted, a number of these species—zebra mussels can have a huge impact on the intakes for municipal water systems, or on the cooling for nuclear power plants, if the intakes for the cooling water for those are impacted by zebra mussels. The Asian carp hasn't arrived yet in Ontario, but we know that it's in the United States. If it ever arrives into the Great Lakes or into any of our other water bodies—

Mr. Mike Colle: Mimico Creek.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mimico Creek, Etobicoke Creek, the Rouge, the Don, the Humber—the impacts would be severe.

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Mr. Speaker, what this bill proposes to do is that, for the first time, Ontario would have a regime, a framework, that would allow us to address these invasive species when they attack our ecology in this province. It would be the first jurisdiction that has a stand-alone regime that allows us to bring in place measures to control and eradicate these species when they present themselves in Ontario. That's why this is a very important piece of legislation.

The impacts that we've already seen in Ontario from some of these things—I know, here in my community, the emerald ash borer. Parts of the city of Toronto and neighbouring municipalities have literally been clear-cut of all trees. Thousands upon thousands of trees had to be

removed. The tree canopy in our municipality was destroyed. The urban heat island effect that that creates, the economic impact on municipalities and just the pleasure of enjoying our natural environment are greatly affected.

With other species, if they were to attack our forests or forestry industry, it could be decimated. The impacts on our economy, on Ontario's ability to continue to create products, export products, have good-quality jobs, would be severely impacted.

The impact on our agricultural sector could be severe with some of these species. Purple loosestrife is an example which chokes off a lot of the waterways wherever it takes root and prevents the flow of water to get into the land and pushes out other natural species. That has an impact.

I'm certainly not an expert in these areas, but I do know that some of these species have already impacted this province. We need a strategy, a framework, legislation, that will give us the tools to combat these problems when they arrive in Ontario and give us the ability to protect Ontario's natural environment and habitats. I urge all members of this House to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Great. Thank you, Speaker. I was hoping you would remember my riding, as we are neighbours. I know sometimes it's hard to roll off the tongue, as the member from Algoma—Manitoulin found out a couple of minutes ago.

It's an honour to rise to add some comments about Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I'd like to congratulate the members from Haldimand—Norfolk, Elgin—Middlesex—London and Sarnia—Lambton.

I know that a number of us on this side of the House have been talking in particular for the last couple of years about phragmites. I would like to take a few seconds just to thank a group in my riding, the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group, who brought the awareness of the damage that phragmites cause to me a couple of years ago. They took me on a tour along Lake Huron in Lambton Shores. Actually, it was in the former municipality of Port Franks where I saw hectares and hectares of damage caused by phragmites. So it's important that this invasive species is brought front and centre in this debate.

I'd like to recognize, actually, Nancy Vidler and others from the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group, who have worked very, very hard to raise this issue province-wide.

Many members have spoken today about the damage that phragmites cause in their riding, and I think all of us, as MPPs, have really been educated on this issue for the last couple of years.

I know in my riding, all across Lake Huron—Ipperwash, Port Franks up to Grand Bend, I believe, in Sarnia—Lambton as well—phragmites are very damaging. In the riding of Chatham—Kent—Essex, I think in Blenheim and across Lake Erie as well, it has been very

damaging.

I'm glad that we've had the opportunity to talk about phragmites today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize, for further questions and comments, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to speak after all the Liberals have spoken over there. It started off with the member from Kingston and the Islands. I always think fondly of Kingston. I hitchhiked there from St. John's, Newfoundland, in 1967. I know that a lot of you weren't even born in 1967, but there you have it.

I have to say, a couple of minutes ago when the member from Algoma—Manitoulin—Manitoulin, Manthoulin—when he spoke about emptying bait buckets, it reminds me—I live in a beautiful part of Windsor called Blue Heron Pond. We have carp—they're goldfish, right? After they got too big for the bowl, somebody dumped them in the pond. We have blue herons. We have swans—and ducks and geese, of course. I have beautiful ring-necked pheasants in my backyard. I can show you the picture.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Any unicorns?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No, no unicorns. I think they're up around Elgin county somewhere.

But we keep dumping these things that we don't want anymore, or we flush them, and they end up in our lakes and rivers, because that's what happens with invasive species.

The member from Barrie was talking about opossums. I had opossums on my front porch in my other home. They come into Windsor on the lumber trucks. There's lumber coming in across the border all the time. The opossums are there. They don't have any hair on their ears. They're freezing in the wintertime. You look out my front window and there they are, paws up in their ears.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Give them a toque.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Give them a toque. I had to dip a little baby opossum out of my pool at my other home. I just threw him over the fence back to the neighbour, where his mother lived, but that's what you do with these invasive species, right?

The pythons in Florida? They have round-ups. They have bounties. They go out and collect them, and they give prizes to the one who gets the biggest one—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, we do—Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I do want to say it's very hard to follow the member from Windsor—Tecumseh, who's always very entertaining. We have no unicorns in our riding of Ottawa South, either.

I just wanted to say a couple of things about this bill. I think it's important as we'll be the first jurisdiction in Canada to have stand-alone legislation for invasive species. It does impact our economy, so if you look at something like zebra mussels, that's a serious cost to utility companies and our municipalities as well, which are affected by water intakes that are clogged by zebra mussels. We have phragmites.

To the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I just want to say that when we bring forward bills like this and a lot of pieces of legislation, we all have common experiences. We have a shared ideal, I believe, although we see different ways of doing things to try to correct those things or get in front of those things that are affecting our communities. That's on all sides of the House.

I'm glad we're talking about it today, because the emerald ash borer has affected my community of Ottawa. I think 40% of the tree cover in Ottawa is ash, and we've lost that. On my street alone, we lost 30 ash trees; I lost one. Pleasant Park Woods, which is an urban forest—not a big one—in Alta Vista has been there for years and years. My wife remembers driving to work last winter. Linda drove to work one day and the forest was there. When she came back, half of the forest was gone. That's about two or three acres.

These are the things that we have to get ahead of. I think this legislation will build on our ability to prevent these things from coming in and to deal with them when they're here. I support the bill fully.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'm proud to speak again on this bill. I'm glad we're finally debating it in the House. I would like to hear more of what the government has to say about this bill, other than four of them standing up over 20 minutes and each saying the same thing, basically. I brought forth ideas today with regard to this bill, and not one member has mentioned any response to anything I've brought forward. I'm hoping when we hit committee, we'll actually have a debate and a vote to support some of the ideas going forward.

I want to bring forth another issue. It goes along somewhat with invasive species, but really when we were talking about washing out your bait pails and making sure you're not transferring bait from island to island, I find it very interesting that the Ministry of Natural Resources here will use a bridge, an actual structure that people use to drive their cars over water, as the border between which side of the bridge you can take bait out and which side you can't—because they're saying that the bait have a disease in them—and rightly so: They should stop them from doing it. However, they're using a bridge as the barrier, as if the fish know that they shouldn't swim to the other side of the bridge because they're tainted with a virus.

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It's little things like this that you could probably fix. I don't know why you guys aren't fixing little things like this. Why would you use a bridge to tell a fish that it

can't swim across? You're still spreading the disease throughout the province, although it might look, on paper, like you've dealt with it—because I know that's what you're saying about this: You'll be the first jurisdiction to deal with invasive species. Why don't we be the first jurisdiction to do it right, to ensure that we have a proper debate, to ensure that our ideas are brought forward, instead of you guys saying, "We want to be number one. We want to be first"?

You're still going to be first at the end of the day, but let's sit down and have a good debate about this. Please, somebody on this side of this House, actually speak about the bill instead of those talking points sitting in front of you—I caught myself, Speaker.

Anyways, thank you. I'll talk again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the original member for—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Don't we get a chance?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I don't believe so.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, it started here. Nice try. That's the other part of your 20-minute speech you had.

I recognize the member from Barrie for her final two minutes.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Partnerships are involved in this bill. We have to have partners when we're managing invasive species. It's always been a collaborative effort, and will continue to be, with all levels of government, industry and environmental groups. For instance, there is an Invading Species Awareness Program with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, which Ontario helped to create and continues to support.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is supportive of this, and their executive director says about the proposed legislation, "I am pleased that the Ontario government will reintroduce the Invasive Species Act, a positive step in the fight against invasive species. The sale, movement and importation of invasive species in Ontario are of a serious concern."

The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London made reference to prevention earlier. I want to point out to this member that this act would include a range of prohibitions such as importing, depositing, releasing, transporting or possessing invasive species. These prohibitions will help with prevention.

The Invasive Species Centre: Their executive director says of this bill, "The proposed legislation is welcome and timely, and would help to set clear priorities and identify those invasive species that are posing the highest risk to Ontario's environment, economy and social values. This initiative would also reinforce the importance of all stakeholders working together toward common objectives that would see invasive species being addressed in classrooms, boardrooms and at the community level."

I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to take this opportunity today to address Bill 37, introduced by the Minister of Natural Resources. I recently brought hundreds of letters from my riding addressed to the Minister of Natural Resources, asking for his assistance in protecting natural resources and species that could be put at risk by a proposed landfill site in my riding. I hope that the minister will read them and do what he can to ensure that those species and our drinking water are not put at risk.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to address Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. As our critic for natural resources, the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London, said in his leadoff speech, we will be supporting this legislation, but we will be putting forward amendments that we think will make it work better. As he referred to just a few minutes ago, we don't hear much from the government, but there are things that could improve this bill. Protecting Ontario's environment and natural resources is important, so I hope that the government side will listen to our comments and consider the amendments, rather than playing politics with this issue.

According to Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program, "Invasive species are one of the greatest threats to Ontario's biodiversity and the health of our lakes, forests, and wetlands."

We've all heard the stories of Asian carp. When startled by noise such as a boat motor, these large fish can jump up to 10 feet in the air, sometimes landing in the boats, which could put boaters at risk. But an even bigger worry is the impact to the environment. Asian carp can eat up to 20% of their body weight each day, leaving little food for the native fish, and the grown carp have no natural predators.

We've heard of zebra mussels, which are impacting our lakes and reducing food supply for our fish.

We've heard of the emerald ash borer, which is already attacking our ash trees, as we heard about in the city of Ottawa, and the concerns about the Asian longhorn beetle.

There is purple loosestrife, which degrades wetlands. It can decimate and choke out native plants that make up the habitats where fish, birds and animals feed and seek shelter. A single plant can produce over 300,000 seeds—and the gypsy moth that has caused so much damage in Niagara.

The impact of these invasive species on our environment, our natural resources and our economy can be significant, so it is important that we get this legislation right.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this issue is too important to let politics play into it, and I have concerns that with the way this bill is currently written, there's an opportunity for that to happen.

For this legislation to be effective, it should be scientific, it should be proactive and it should be fair.

In his leadoff speech, the minister mentioned that dealing with invasive species is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. I know that municipalities have contacted previous ministers to express concerns about invasive species and ask for greater assistance. However, addressing this problem doesn't just require all levels of government; it requires environmental organizations, farmers, conservation groups, people who are transporting goods and many others to work together. You simply cannot get that level of co-operation and agreement unless you can demonstrate that the invasive species list is based on scientific data.

Currently, the legislation doesn't include a scientific process for determining which species are being added to the invasive species list.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government's non-scientific approach right now on the threat to our pollinators, and it could be putting our bee population at risk. The government is blaming all the bee deaths on neonicotinoids, without having the scientific data to really show all the causes. What if the neonicotinoids are only a small part of the problem? What if, as some people and studies have suggested, the larger threat to our bees is the mites or the chemicals that beekeepers have been using to treat the mites? What if the cause is the extreme cold winters we've been experiencing, and we need to look at better ways to protect our bees? The government's knee-jerk political reaction may be causing hardship for our farmers without actually addressing the major cause of bee deaths. That's why we need a scientific approach, both for our pollinators' health and the invasive species.

The Ministry of Natural Resources' Ontario invasive species plan, released in 2012, mentions science 24 times. It talks about the importance of developing science-based standard monitoring protocols for priority invasive species, pathways and habitat types. It talks about Ontario ministries, including MNR and OMAFRA, participating in a variety of conferences designed to ensure ongoing science transfer. But that science-based approach doesn't seem to have made it into this legislation. I hope that this is one of the things that can be corrected at committee.

Mr. Speaker, one of our other concerns in this act is that it is reactive. It will add invasive species to the list when there is evidence that they have already caused harm. Our critic for natural resources, the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, has proposed that we look at a pathway approach instead. This approach is proactive and would study potential invasive species, the harm that they could cause and the pathways that they could use to enter the province. This would allow resources to be focused where there is a potential problem and, importantly, where we can try to stop the invasive species before they enter the province.

This approach was the focus of the Ministry of Natural Resources' Ontario invasive species plan, released in 2012. In fact, that report said, "Preventing harmful introductions before they occur is the most effective

means to avoid the risk of invasive species arriving in Ontario. Investments in prevention are cost-effective as they avoid the economic, environmental and social costs of invaders.”

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As I said earlier, for this legislation to be effective, it should be scientific, it should be proactive and, again, it should be fair. Part of that is ensuring that we are working with impacted property owners, not making them the enemy. I'm pleased that this bill requires a warrant for many searches, but I'm concerned that there is still an exception which allows enforcement officers access without a warrant or permission of the owner.

While we support this bill, I think we need to be careful with any legislation that provides access to private property without a warrant, unless there is an immediate danger. I'm especially concerned when that authority is given to someone other than a police officer.

Coming from an agriculture community, biosecurity is always a huge concern. Anytime we're expanding the number of people who have a right to enter the property without the owner's permission, I have a concern.

I know that there are many people in this Legislature who haven't been involved in agriculture, so I want to explain a little bit more. Unfortunately, in my riding of Oxford we're dealing with an outbreak of H5N2 avian flu which was found on a turkey farm. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency took swift action to quarantine the farm and culled 45,000 turkeys to ensure that the rest of our poultry is safe. The farms are being disinfected, and other farmers are stepping up their biosecurity measures. One of the biosecurity measures they are taking is disinfecting the tires on feed delivery trucks to ensure that it isn't being spread from farm to farm.

On hog farms, we have biosecurity measures to stop the spread of PED. If the enforcement officer has to get permission from the farmer before entering the property, that gives the farmer the ability to put conditions such as disinfecting tires in place before the enforcement officer is allowed to enter the property. It gives the farmer the opportunity to ask questions such as which farms the enforcement officer has visited and to say no if the visit at the time would put animals at risk.

Mr. Speaker, no one wants the spread of invasive species, but we need to ensure that we are setting up systems where people are working together and where knowledge and rights of the property owner are respected.

I want to commend the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for their work to raise awareness of invasive species. In 1992, they created a partnership with MNR called Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program, which has been working hard to inform people about the invasive species and actions they can take. In fact, one of their recent publications was *Landowner's Guide to Managing and Controlling Invasive Plants*. I think we need to ensure that we continue the approach of education and working with landowners.

The minister talked about enforcement, but we need to ensure that the people being punished are the people

breaking the law, such as those trying to import invasive species, not the property owners who happen to have an invasive species on their property and are trying to do the right thing.

By definition, it's difficult to stop the spread of these species. They don't recognize property boundaries any more than they stop at provincial boundaries. The legislation should help property owners deal with them, not penalize them.

Section 29 of this bill says the minister “may”—and it was mentioned earlier in the other speech. “The minister may authorize compensation” for a number of things, including the “loss of any building, structure, conveyance or property owned...” That concerns us when the word is “may.” That also implies that the answer could be “may not,” and I think that would be unfair. This section needs to be strengthened.

We all understand that sometimes actions need to be taken for the greater good to stop the spread of disease or invasive species. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, we've seen that demonstrated in the last week in my riding when the H5N2 avian flu was found at the turkey farm. It's obviously not an invasive species like we're addressing here today, but the impact is similar to the type of situation that would be covered by this bill. As I said, the CFIA quarantined the farms and culled 45,000 turkeys to ensure that the rest of our poultry is safe.

We understand that sometimes steps need to be taken to protect the greater good, but there has to be a recognition of that impact. But this act gives the minister and the inspection officers significant powers over private property, and with that power there should be some responsibility. The property owner shouldn't be left to pay the price.

There are different threats from invasive species across Ontario. It's difficult to get this legislation right when we're talking about so many different species—from plants to fish to insects—all of which travel in different ways, enter the province from different areas and pose different threats to our environment and our natural resources.

One of the things that's great about this Legislature is that we have members with such varied backgrounds and representing all parts of Ontario, people who can look at whether this legislation will work in their riding: people like the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, whose riding is along Lake Erie and who knows how devastating the impact of the Asian carp would be; people like the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook, who dealt with the gypsy moth in his riding; members from northern Ontario ridings who could talk about the dangers invasive species pose to the forestry industry; members who can talk about wetlands in their ridings that are being impacted; and people who work in industries that will be impacted.

There are some people in this Legislature who probably wouldn't have considered the biosecurity issues on farms created by this bill—and the people who have raised other concerns that we haven't considered yet. It

shows the value of debate that we have in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. Recently it seems there has been a trend towards cutting off debate or government members using some of their time to complain that there has actually been too much debate. We're seeing in the last few days a new tactic: We're splitting up the time and everybody speaks in a matter of 20 minutes and nobody gets to say anything—and to move this through.

I would hope that that won't be the case with this bill because we need to hear from members from all areas of Ontario. If this bill passes second reading, it goes to committee. We need to ensure that it travels through areas that are being impacted or threatened, as well as to hear from residents and experts from those areas.

I'd like to see us travel in southwestern Ontario to hear from farm organizations, to hear from other organizations like the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, which I know has been working on some of these same issues. They represent the area that the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London is from. I'd like to see the committee travel to northern Ontario to talk about the forestry industry and what they need to do to protect it.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill to put forward some concerns and suggestions. I hope that the government has been listening to the debate today because I think a number of members have put forward real concerns and suggestions on how this bill could be improved.

We agree with the need to identify invasive species, and not just those in Ontario. We live in a global society. Travel, trade and Ontario's central location mean that we cannot ignore the invasive species that are impacting our neighbours. We believe that our approach should be proactive, to try and stop these threats before they cross our borders. We believe that the approach should include education and should work with landowners to address invasive species. I hope that the government will agree with our approach and work with us to ensure that this bill meets those goals.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to put a few thoughts on the record on this bill.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Oxford has in fact given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given to him by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister—or parliamentary assistant, in this case—may have up to five minutes to reply.

I'll turn it over to the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to speak about the problems of the Housing Services Corp. and the cost to Ontario's social housing.

Every dollar that the Housing Services Corp. spends is one that's supposed to build, repair or operate social housing. Earlier today I brought forward a number of examples of housing providers who are being overcharged for natural gas and insurance by the Housing Services Corp.

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In his response, the minister failed to address these examples or the families that are still waiting for affordable housing because this money has been diverted. I want to mention a number of them again.

In one year, CityHousing Hamilton reported spending \$1.1 million more for gas because they had to purchase it through the Housing Services Corp., enough to provide rent supplements for 140 families.

Peel region reported they paid an additional \$200,000 for gas in one year.

The Thunder Bay district social services board reported that they paid an additional \$750,000 for natural gas over four years due to the HSC.

This morning, I asked the minister how much buying through the Housing Services Corp. is costing Toronto Community Housing. We know the minister has met with them, but he didn't answer my question. We know that there are thousands of families in Toronto waiting for social housing. We know that there are units that have been boarded up because the TCHC can't afford to repair them. We know that Toronto Community Housing would save money and could help more people if the minister and his government would support my private member's bill.

Mr. Speaker, it isn't just large housing providers that are paying too much due to the Housing Services Corp. Oxford county says the Housing Services Corp. costs them about \$100,000 a year, enough to provide housing for 25 more families. As I mentioned in my question this morning, Bruce county, Hastings, Halton, Prince Edward, Lennox and Addington, if they weren't required to purchase services through the Housing Services Corp., could all help more people who need social housing.

Over the last two days alone, I have received support for my bill from the city of Owen Sound, the township of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands, the township of Alfred and Plantagenet, the township of Faraday, the township of Wainfleet, the township of Hudson, the town of Tillsonburg in my riding, and, incidentally, the city of Quinte West, which is of course in the parliamentary assistant's own riding.

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 100 housing providers who are obtaining insurance from another company but are still being forced to pay the Housing Services Corp. for the privilege of doing so: 2.5% of their cost. That means their insurance volume isn't required to get discounted rates for other housing providers, as the government claims. It means those 100 housing providers

are paying a fee equal to 2.5% of the premium to the Housing Services Corp. simply because the HSC has a monopoly and can demand it. We have an opportunity to stop that from happening. Think of how much affordable housing could be provided with that money.

Where is that money going? Some of it is going to fund the more than \$82,000 the CEO has spent on travel, including \$53,000 on flights. Some of it was invested in a corporation whose address is a lawyer's office in Manchester, England. Mr. Speaker, we don't know why the money was put in that corporation that doesn't seem to have ever operated, but the money seems to be gone. The money also went into Innoserv Solar, a for-profit solar company that received over \$1 million in loans from the HSC, most of which was written off as uncollectable in the same year it was given. The government's review isn't looking at this money, where it went or whether there is any way to get it back. Every dollar was one that was supposed to go to social housing.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about political parties. This is about money being diverted away from vulnerable people who need affordable housing. That's why I was so disappointed that the minister ignored my question this morning. The government says more accountability was needed at the Housing Services Corp. Clearly, there is still a problem. In 2012, the Housing Services Corp. entered into a partnership with another British organization.

This Thursday, we have an opportunity to increase that accountability. We have an opportunity to stop public money from being wasted and ensure that it provides housing for our most vulnerable, as it's intended to do.

I hope that now that he has had a few more hours to reflect, the minister and the members of the government will support the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act and stop the waste and misuse of social housing dollars.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Oxford. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Housing Services Corp., HSC, is an independent non-profit corporation originally established under the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, SHRA, and continues under the Housing Services Act, 2011.

HSC is mandated to provide certain vital and valued services centrally with a goal to reduce costs and improve efficiencies to the housing providers assessing them.

Under the Housing Services Act, 2011, HSA, our government broadened the HSC mandate to improve the operation, efficiency and long-term sustainability of housing providers that provide housing for moderate and low-income households.

As a government that is committed to openness and transparency, we believe that accountable, fiscally responsible policies are critical. That is why in 2011,

under the HSA, our government reformed the legislation that governed HSC. As a result of our reforms, HSC is required to provide an annual report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, along with audited financial statements, within 180 days of the end of its fiscal year.

Mr. Hardeman's erroneous assertion that our government changed legislation to remove a requirement for HSC to report salaries on the sunshine list is simply not true. The changes to the HSA did not remove HSC from the disclosure requirements in the public sector disclosure act. In fact, the HSA included stronger accountability requirements by requiring HSC to include certain salaries in its public annual report.

The HSC is only required to report for the year that it's receiving funding from the government of Ontario of at least \$1 million or government funding that is at least 10% of its gross revenues, and then only if that 10% is \$120,000 or more. No funding has been provided to HSC by the ministry since 2011-12, and therefore it's not required to report salaries for 2014.

I'm increasingly puzzled by Mr. Hardeman's ongoing campaign of misinformation around the HSC. The HSC benefits every one of its clients in the long run by purchasing bulk services for them all, at once.

In his question this morning, my honourable colleague mentioned some municipalities he claims have expressed concerns over HSC and its operations. For example—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask the member to withdraw. You used a word that is unparliamentary, so I would ask that you would withdraw.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw, Speaker.

Let me read to you a quote from Peel Housing Corp.:

"I am writing to express my full endorsement for Housing Services Corp. HSC works for us housing providers by leveraging our combined buying power in the private market, making sure we get the best deals. HSC provides capacity and shared expertise in areas such as insurance and energy purchase, so that housing providers can focus on service delivery to our low-income and vulnerable tenant population. HSC ensures that both small and large affordable housing providers in Ontario continue to be viable.

"Since 2013, HSC has significantly improved its programs and operations and the value they deliver to the social housing sector in Ontario. They're helping us reduce energy consumption. They're sharing tools to help keep insurance costs low and improve the safety of our communities. HSC has also demonstrated their commitment to improving their programs on an ongoing basis."

Speaker, that was a quote.

As I said earlier, our government is committed to being accountable, open and transparent about how we spend taxpayers' hard-earned money. Back in the fall, when the minister became aware of some questionable reimbursement and compensation practices at HSC, he wrote to the board chair reaffirming the government's expectation that the corporation ensure that every dollar is spent wisely and efficiently.

In response to his letter, the HSC board approved revised remuneration and expense policies that are more in line with the Management Board of Cabinet's directives. As part of HSC's commitment to be more open, transparent and accountable, the corporation asked the ministry to help facilitate an independent third-party review of HSC and its subsidiaries. We will await the outcome of the review, due later this spring, and if further action is needed, our government is willing to take it.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude here. I have much more, but my time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
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Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
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Han Dong, Randy Hillier
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 April 2015

Mercredi 15 avril 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 14, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West had the floor, completed, and we're now into questions and comments.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I very much look forward to the opportunity to speak on Bill 57, the pooled retirement pension plans. I think that this particular piece of legislation—and many who are listening out there will probably know these products as PRPPs. This discussion is very important in relation to the discussion around the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, the ORPP. I would argue to you, Speaker, that both of these things, the ORPP and the PRPPs, go hand in hand.

We need to ensure that Ontarians are saving more. I think one of the alarming statistics or data that we continue to see, not only just in relation to Ontarians but Canadians writ large, is that we're not saving enough. We're not putting enough aside as a future nest egg to be able to have a comfortable retirement and maintain our quality of life. So everything and anything the government can do to help assist people save is important. We have the RRSP system, which is voluntary in nature; so is the PRPP system. If this legislation is passed, it will be voluntary in nature.

But that's why the third piece, the ORPP, is extremely important in combination with the CPP, where we create that incentive for people to put some money aside as a safeguard that will allow people, Ontarians in particular, to retire with sufficient income that will ensure that they have a decent quality of life. This, I would argue, Speaker, is in the current framework and is absolutely an im-

portant issue that we need to deal with. I'm really proud that our government is taking a leadership role, not only in Ontario but in Canada, in making sure that we have secure retirement income for Ontarians.

I urge all members to support Bill 57.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Look, everybody deserves to retire with dignity. In this particular instance, Speaker, the expression that we've heard more than once is that we're using a sledgehammer to kill an ant, as some would say, in place of a flyswatter, perhaps. This is going after the 13% who desperately need our help, and I would agree wholeheartedly that we need to do something to help those 13% who need our help. But we're putting out here an overarching bill that will hurt the 87% to help the 13%.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and just about every association from the restaurant association to the construction association talk about how this will hurt business. Ninety-seven per cent of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is against this. The chamber of commerce already told us that Ontario's job market is in crisis. The government's own Ministry of Finance told us, quite clearly, how many thousands of jobs we are going to lose when this bill passes: 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion taken out of the system. It could be 54,000 jobs.

As I said yesterday in question period, look around. Speaker, we can't afford to lose those 54,000 more jobs. Day after day after day, companies are leaving: 2,700 companies left Ontario last year—2,700 fewer companies here today than last year. We are in crisis and we can least afford to go down this path of an overarching ORPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Retirement for all Ontarians, for all Canadians, is an extremely important subject because when you come to the age that you're ready to retire, I think we all worry about, can we afford the cost of living? Part of that is good planning on an individual's part, but also a part of that is having the means to save, to plan for that retirement.

The CPP is a federal program, it's a good program and there were talks about enhancing that. That's probably the most efficient way of handling it to help people retire, not just for Ontarians but throughout Canada, because I'm sure that other people have the same challenges that we're facing here. But that didn't happen. The federal government has declined to enhance the CPP in order to

help everyday, hard-working Ontarians, and therefore other choices have to be made.

We have the RRSPs that people can access on their own, as they need or as they feel they can contribute to. We support the ORPP that the government has presented. We think it's a good initiative because it's a partnership: You've got employees participating and you have employers participating.

But in this case, Speaker, the PRPP—and the name of this bill really doesn't explain what it really is. It's a glorified RRSP. It's driven just by a worker's contribution, and it's not the solution to how people should be saving for their future retirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from—I always have trouble with this one.

Interjection: Newmarket—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand up and address the issue of Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. I always like to take it back to some of the original issues, because there is a lot of rhetoric around what should be done and what needs to be done. I agree with members who say that Ontarians need to save more for our retirement. I think virtually everybody agrees with that. I'm concerned about my children and their retirement.

0910

But it's just not enough to say that Ontarians need to save for retirement. Ontarians need new vehicles so that they can save for their retirement, and the pooled registered pension plan is simply one of them. This is a new type of voluntary, tax-assisted, individual retirement savings vehicle administered by a licensed third party. They're really intended to make it easier to save for retirement by providing employees and self-employed individuals with additional savings vehicles that are low-cost—that's really achieved through its simple design and its economies of scale—professionally managed and portable from one workplace to another. In addition, they have a more favourable tax treatment than group Registered Retirement Savings Plans, so there are significant differences between those and traditional retirement savings plans.

PRPPs are intended to be particularly beneficial for small and medium-sized businesses that may not have the capacity to offer a more traditional pension plan, so the government is encouraging investment in voluntary retirement saving tools such as this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor West has two minutes.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yesterday, I had the pleasure of speaking to Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. I had 20 minutes to share our concerns, on this side of the room, around the pooled registered pension plan. During my time, I also spoke about the plans that are offered through employers—so, those who work 20 or 30 years toward a pension and then we have these com-

panies that pack up and leave, and leave those employees without their retirement benefits.

My concern about these PRPPs is the security. If we have companies where people are working 20 or 30 years toward retirement and there's supposed to be a plan there for them when they retire, and those companies are able to pick up and move over to the States or to Mexico and not honour their commitments to provide a pension for their employees—my thinking is that this plan is very much the same. People who struggle to save for retirement are going to be putting money into this plan and essentially—the member from Newmarket–Aurora pointed out that this is a voluntary plan administered by a licensed third party. Those third parties actually charge exorbitant fees that cut into the savings these people have struggled to put into them for their retirement. So essentially, what they put in could be very different from what's available to them when they retire.

I'd like to address the fact that it's voluntary. I believe they, from the other side, mentioned yesterday that for 60 days it's not voluntary. For 60 days, employees have to pay into this. My concern is: At the end of the 60 days, are people going to remember to opt out? When they do decide to opt out, are they going to get that 60 days' worth of contributions back, or is that money they've now lost and don't have available to put away into a vehicle they would rather have when they retire?

I think these are concerns that need to be addressed from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Good morning, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seems to be a problem here. Are we okay?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm sorry. I've just been told I'm going to be sharing my time with—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe the member has already spoken on this, so we'll have to have someone else.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry, the member will sit down. The member has spoken on this.

I recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to clarify that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Kitchener Centre, the minister responsible for seniors and the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Interjections.

Mr. Chris Ballard: That was fairly easy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm glad we're all having a wonderful group conversation. I'm having trouble even hearing the speaker.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just reiterate what I said a few minutes ago: that I agree totally with what members before have said. Ontarians do need to save more for retirement. We're certainly not

doing enough of that. But at the same time, Ontarians recognize that they need different, new, less expensive saving vehicles, and pooled registered pension plans will give them that.

I just want to take the discussion back to some of the basics of the bill. Ontario introduced this legislation, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014, to implement PRPPs in the province by December 8, 2014. As we've said—I want to take it back to some of the basics—PRPPs are a new type of voluntary, tax-assisted individual retirement savings vehicle. They're administered by licensed third-party administrators such as regulated financial institutions, with investments pooled to reduce costs and improve returns.

PRPPs are intended to make it easier to save for retirement by providing employees and self-employed individuals with additional savings vehicles that are low-cost. And they're low-cost because they are simple in design and through economies of scale, with individuals pooling their resources. They're professionally managed and portable from one workplace to another. That's critical, that they're portable from one workplace to another.

In addition, they have a more favourable tax treatment than group Registered Retirement Pension Plans, or RRSPs. PRPPs are intended to be particularly beneficial to small- and medium-sized businesses that may not have the capacity to offer traditional pension plans.

Encouraging investment in voluntary retirement savings tools such as the pooled registered pension plan is an important part of our strategy to make sure that Ontarians are able to save for their retirement, and that they have a variety of different vehicles—low-cost vehicles—in order to save for their retirement.

A bit of history about the PRPPs: After two years of federal-provincial-territorial collaboration in the development and the design of PRPPs, the federal government was the first to introduce a legislative framework for PRPPs, in December 2012. This framework applies to employees in federally regulated sectors such as banking, telecommunications and interprovincial transportation and the three territories. Legislation must be passed, however, in each province before PRPPs can be made available to individuals in provincially regulated sectors and self-employed individuals working in the province.

The federal government continues to advocate for provinces to introduce the necessary provincial PRPP legislation. When we look across the country, where are the other provinces and territories at with regard to implementing this very important legislation? British Columbia has the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act from May 2014; Alberta implemented the same act in May 2013; Saskatchewan has the Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act, which received royal assent in May 2013; Nova Scotia has a similar act that was implemented in 2014; and in Quebec the Voluntary Retirement Savings Plans Act received royal assent in December 2013. Across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia the legislation mirrors the federal PRPP Act so that provincial regulations come into effect before the legislation can come into force.

I will leave it there, Mr. Speaker, and turn the floor over to our member from—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Chris Ballard:—Kitchener Centre. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member for doing my job there. I appreciate that. The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Always happy to help, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to join the discussion today on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. Last year we informed Ontarians that this government is very much committed to addressing the retirement income crunch that many people are going to be facing in the future. That's why we are introducing this very innovative new strategy that's going to help people save for the future, save for their senior years.

PRPPs are a new type of voluntary, tax-assisted, individual retirement savings vehicle. And the reason why you see our government bringing this forward is to make it easier to save for retirement for employees and also for self-employed people—for that segment of the workforce that we often hear is unprepared for retirement.

This is an additional savings vehicle that is going to be low-cost. It's based on a very simple design model and it will be professionally managed. It's going to be portable, so if a worker moves from one job to another they can take the plan with them; it transfers, it's going to follow them to the next workplace.

The other advantage here is that PRPPs will have a more favourable tax status than group Registered Retirement Savings Plans, or RRSPs. PRPPs are designed to be of particular benefit for small and medium-sized businesses that oftentimes don't have the capacity and the wherewithal to offer a plan to their workers, the traditional type of pension plan you see in larger workplaces. PRPPs would be administered by licensed third-party administrators, such as financial institutions, which are regulated. These, of course, have their investments pooled to reduce costs and that improves returns.

0920

If you will remember, the 2014 budget and the fall economic statement stated that the government intended to move forward with the PRPP plan. The framework at the time, we noted, would be consistent with the model introduced by the federal government. We already see this being adopted in a number of provinces. You've already heard this mentioned by my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora.

On December 8, Ontario introduced legislation to implement PRPPs in this province. If this bill is passed by the Legislature, it would come into play once supporting regulations have been developed. It should be noted that as a voluntary retirement savings vehicle, the preferred approach is that PRPPs would not be considered a "comparable" workplace pension plan. That's in the context of the new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, or the ORPP. People enrolled in a PRPP would not be exempt from

taking part in the ORPP. In December of this past year, Ontario released a consultation paper that looked at feedback on some key ORPP policy issues, including what constitutes a “comparable” workplace pension plan.

I touched earlier, Mr. Speaker, on the federal model and the framework provided to Canada’s provinces. The background on this is that after two years of federal, provincial and territorial talks, Ottawa did introduce a legislative framework for PRPPs, and that happened in December 2012. This framework also applies to workers in federally regulated sectors—telecommunications, banking and a few other areas, to name a few. It should be noted that legislation must be passed in each province before PRPPs can be made available to employees in provincially regulated sectors. That also applies to self-employed people working in our provinces.

You heard mention of how this is working in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec. I want to mention that here in Ontario our framework is going to stress that it’s voluntary. It will be automatic enrolment. There will be licensing. Contribution rates are going to be looked at. The initial rates and increases to those rates would be set by the administrators. It will be locked in. You’ll see pooling of investments. And it will be low-cost.

This made-in-Ontario model is largely consistent with the approach that is being taken by other provinces. Encouraging people to invest in voluntary retirement savings tools such as the PRPP is a very important part of our strategy to help Ontario workers retire with greater financial security. By taking this action now, we’re going to strengthen retirement for Ontarians and support those who are most at risk of undersaving. Ultimately, it will protect our economy.

I now yield to my colleague from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ottawa—Orléans.

Ms. Daïene Vernile: —Ottawa—Orléans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry; the minister responsible for seniors affairs.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Evidently this morning, Speaker, we have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There’s a little confusion today.

Hon. Mario Sergio: No, it’s quite all right. Actually, I was going to say—not wanting to do your job—that after me comes the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this particular piece of legislation. I’m quite in agreement with my colleague the member from Nipissing when he says that seniors, when they reach a particular age, are entitled to live in dignity. I think this is really the core point of this piece of legislation. We all agree that when we reach retirement age we would like to retire and live in dignity. I think this is where we have to separate the two views, if you will.

If we can agree on that, then the next important question should then be, if something has to be done, how are

we going to do it? What is the best way of doing it? We have seen the, if you will, unwillingness of the federal government to make some improvements to the federal pension plan, so we said that unless we get co-operation, we’re going to go on our own and we’re going to do it ourselves. And we are on the way. So if nothing happens until then, Speaker, with respect to co-operation from the federal government, as of 2017, I believe, the plan will start to kick in.

We are kind of late, as a matter of fact, because we are not the only province willing to do this provincial retirement pension plan. I think we already have another five Canadian provinces, including Saskatchewan and Quebec, I believe. Let me read them to you, Speaker, because it’s important. We’re not the only one that is looking to make improvements to the provincial pension plan. British Columbia and Alberta have already done it, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec—they have all passed legislation with respect to provincial pension plans.

I have to say that I don’t have to go very far away from my own riding, because my riding consists very highly of working-class people and has been like that for a heck of a long time. I have the pleasure of serving this House here as the minister responsible for seniors, and that affords me the opportunity to travel throughout Ontario. I have to tell you, Speaker, that the seniors in Hamilton, the seniors in York West, the ones in Kingston and Thunder Bay all want the same thing. If they don’t have that wonderful peace of mind that they’re comfortably enjoying their retirement years, it’s because in past years they didn’t work for a company that afforded them the possibility of a reasonable or good pension plan, or a pension plan at all.

So over tough years they had to raise a family and had to pay the mortgage. They didn’t have a pension plan and they didn’t make enough to put money aside. In other words, today they are living solely on the Canada Pension Plan. And it’s not easy; I don’t have to tell you. Every day utilities go up and taxes go up. House taxes, insurance, water rates, gas, electricity—everything is going up except the pension plan. It does not keep up with the expenses faced by our seniors today.

So when we are saying today that we have to prepare for the next generation, so that they don’t fall into the same situation that we are facing today—I think you and I are just about retirement age, Mr. Speaker. We know how it is. We start to think about it and say, “Will I be able to continue to live with the same standard of living that I’m living with today when I reach the age of 65 and beyond?”—providing that we will stay healthy. If we are not healthy after that time, it’s going to be even worse.

So that the legislation is on the road now, looking for consultation, I think speaks to the fact of, “Let’s work on it.” Let’s see how we can indeed do something so that our seniors of tomorrow will be enjoying the kind of retirement that the seniors of today would like to enjoy.

My time is up and I will have to give it to the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very proud to stand up today, along with my colleagues, on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, not only as someone who is concerned about the ability of Ontarians to save for the future, but as well as a former business owner who has experience and knowledge of this field.

The PRPP is a voluntary, tax-assisted, individual retirement savings vehicle that is administered by licensed third-party administrators, with investments pooled to reduce costs and improve returns.

As many of you know, our government is committed to helping people build up retirement security. Creating the PRPP will allow Ontarians to retire with dignity. We know that Ontarians are not saving enough, and we want to help everyone create retirement savings so that people can enjoy retirement and not worry about their old age income.

0930

The plan I ran on, which the people of the riding of Ottawa-Orléans supported, was a plan that got a resounding majority government elected. This plan was to help Ontarians save for retirement because the Canada Pension Plan is simply not enough anymore.

By establishing a pooling of retirement savings, we will give companies and individuals greater tools to help them save for the future.

While we hope that the federal government raises the CPP, we also have a mandate here in Ontario to care for Ontarians and their retirement savings. Our government will go about this through two vehicles: the ORPP and our pooled registered pension plan. We have consulted with businesses and stakeholders on the PRPP to ensure that we listened to their concerns, and have addressed all the impacts that Bill 57 will have on the business community.

Overwhelmingly, we have heard that the Canada Pension Plan is not enough. We know that we must have a CPP enhancement, but that simply isn't happening on Parliament Hill. That is why this government is bringing in Bill 57.

Workplace pension plans aren't as common as they used to be. There are many Ontarians who will work very hard and find out that they do not have enough to retire and enjoy those later years. Pooled pensions will be one of the tools to make up for the savings gap that has widened in the CPP and RRSPs. By creating a voluntary pension plan for employers and the self-employed, we can help more people save and more seniors retire with the money they need and deserve. We will help Ontarians prepare for their future retirement, something this government strongly believes in doing.

When it comes to knowing about seniors' care, I certainly understand a lot, or a little bit more, given my previous life as the owner of a retirement residence and having worked for 15 years with seniors. From my past experience, I saw first-hand the experiences of seniors and spoke with many families who told me about their worries about their own retirement savings.

After decades of hard work, the last thing a senior wants to do is to re-enter the workforce and continue to

worry about whether they will have enough for their old age. That time should be spent enjoying life with their family, with their grandchildren, and certainly not worrying about their retirement savings. That is why I urge all members of this House to support Bill 57: in order to help the people of this province have the greatest retirement future in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

We on the Progressive Conservative side are obviously opposed to the ORPP because it is being forced upon individuals and corporations. However, we are, in fact, in favour of the pooled registered pension plan, and one of the reasons why we're in favour of it is that it's not mandatory. It is not mandatory at all.

I would like to compliment our member from York-Simcoe, who introduced Bill 50 back in 2013. Of course, it died on the order paper at that point in time.

Again, the PCs have been at the forefront, advocating for such a pension plan. I'm very glad to see that the government is now realizing that, hey, maybe we do have a few good ideas over on this side of the House.

Again, when we take a look at pension plans and we take a look at options for employers and employees, all we have to do is refer to, for example, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce as well as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Unlike the government, many times, whereby they have not consulted adequately, these two organizations have consulted adequately and they have found that many employers, for example, are very much in favour of the PRPP, the pooled registered pension plan. They like it.

One of the other things that I also appreciate about this plan as opposed to the ORPP is that this particular act establishes rules respecting the entitlement of a surviving spouse when the holder of a PRPP dies. These funds are protected from creditors with a few exceptions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Pretty much everybody in Canada, except for the Harper Conservatives, seems to recognize that the best way to ensure the retirement security of Canadians is through the Canada Pension Plan, which is why there is such a push to enhance that plan. The reasons that the Canada Pension Plan is so effective are: because it is mandatory—all Canadians who are in the workplace must contribute; because the employer also contributes to the plan; and because it provides a guarantee of what kind of income Canadians can rely on when they retire. Finally, the Canada Pension Plan is a very efficient model of retirement security. Administration costs are 1% or less, and so this is one of the reasons that the Canada Pension Plan is highly regarded as the best vehicle to ensure that Canadians can retire with dignity and security.

Unfortunately, the PRPPs that have been proposed by the Liberal government have none of these characteristics. They are voluntary, there is no employer contribution, there is no guarantee of what kind of benefit people will receive when they retire—it will all depend on the vagaries of the market—and, finally, it is very inefficient. There are high administration fees that go along with enrolment in these plans, just like RRSPs.

The question is, why do we need this plan? We already know that Ontarians are not utilizing the kind of contribution room they have available to them in RRSPs. PRPPs will benefit only those who can afford to contribute, which is a very small number of people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This particular act, Bill 57, is a measure that allows Ontario to implement a flawed federal proposal. This particular pooled registered pension plan is interesting; it's yet another tool for the wealthy to be able to accumulate things, but it just doesn't work for people in the early stages of their careers or in the middle stages of the careers. What we really need in this country is meaningful reform of the Canada Pension Plan.

The Canada Pension Plan is 50 years old. At the time the Canada Pension Plan came into being, the average age that a man lived was 68; the average age that a woman lived was about 74. Today, men and women are living an extra 15 years. So the reality is that what we really need is a program that's mandatory for both the employer and the employee that allows them to accumulate their savings throughout their working lives. We need a pension plan that's portable, that moves with the employee as he or she changes companies and changes careers. That's not in this pooled registered pension plan.

Yes, it's something we'll do so that Ontarians can offer it, but it's not the thing that we should have. What we should have is a meaningful reform of the Canada Pension Plan. That's the part that Canadians need. That's the tool that Canadians who were born in one province and work in another will need to move from province to province and to be portable.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Vote against it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Lanark.

Mr. Bob Delaney: This thing is very nice, but it's yet another tool that people in the early stages of their careers can't afford, people in the middle stages of their careers spend their time chasing house prices and don't put money into, and people in the later stages of their careers say, "How come I never have anything? Because I didn't put anything in." So I'll vote for it, but we really need an improved CPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The pooled registered pension plan is a very good idea. It was developed by our member from York-Simcoe and it's a well-thought-out plan that everybody in our party agrees with.

0940

We live in a democracy, and in this democracy freedom is the foundation of our government, of our democracy. This pooled registered pension plan provides the freedom to people, workers and employers, to choose to participate in this pension plan or not. And that is a wonderful thing, because not everybody's needs or wants for retirement are the same, nor are their ways to invest in retirement or secure retirement the same.

Some people do have the ability to save for themselves without government, believe it or not, and do quite well. This pension plan would give an employer the freedom to choose to be in or out himself, as well as the employee. So it could happen that an employer who didn't need a pension plan because he's done well in other ways could have it for his employees, and either contribute or not with the employees.

I think that freedom part is an essential part of what we need to respect here. The Ontario registered pension plan, which is the other one that comes from the Liberal government across the way, is mandatory. It requires a 1.9% charge to the employer as well as to the employee. It's a payroll tax. There is no freedom; there is no option. If they raise \$2 billion with this tax, it will cost us 18,000 jobs; that's what we are told by a study. That is not what is going to make Ontario prosperous or get us back on our feet. We need the flexibility and the freedom of a pooled registered pension plan like this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has two minutes.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank all the members who made a contribution to the debate on second reading of Bill 57. I hope that the constructive arguments will complement the work that the Associate Minister of Finance, Mitzie Hunter, is doing. She is travelling throughout Ontario doing consultations, as of last December 1, on this particular piece of legislation. Minister Hunter has been travelling Ontario presenting the proposal, and she is getting all kinds of information from various stakeholders throughout our province. And that's the way it should be. We want to make sure that we get all the information, that we get everyone involved with respect to the legislation. We hope that when it comes finally to us, it can be presented in a much better form.

Let me say, Speaker, last night I was at a town hall meeting in my area. Two particular questions arose from the people who were in the room. One was about health care for seniors, if you will, and the other one was, how can we live on this measly pension plan that we have today? Somebody else rose and said, "How much would we be getting if we had this particular plan today?" I said, "Probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of doubling the present Canada Pension Plan." "Ah, that would have been much better than what we have today."

Speaker, I think this is the intent of what we are trying to do today: to make life better, retirement better, for our seniors when they reach that particular age. It isn't going to help you or me today, but it's going to help the grandchildren, our children, and we hope that they will save

some extra money so their life at retirement can be much better. This is the intent. I hope that we can support this, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I am happy to rise today to speak on Bill 57, pooled pension plans. My colleague from York—Simcoe introduced Bill 50 in 2013, so I am happy to see that the Liberal government has followed up on a program to support our stakeholders, our businesses, of this great province.

I heard a comment over here talking about Bill 57 and Bill 56, and why they came out at basically the same time. It really makes you wonder, was it Bill 56—the ORPP certainly has lot of contention in this province. A lot of our businesses—you could say all of our business associations have spoken against this. So Bill 57 is introduced—within sessional days of each other. You've just got to wonder, was it put out there for confusion or why all of a sudden? On one hand they're talking about voluntary, on the other hand they talk about mandatory—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Of course, we have a comment from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. I know we saw him saving last night at a hockey game. He talks about the trouble of saving and how a flawed plan—we wonder really why the Liberal government would be putting out a plan that they think is flawed. I guess it comes down to partisan lines where, sure, the Conservative government in Ottawa has allowed us to voluntarily put a network in place and most of the other provinces have jumped on the bandwagon. Finally, this government is coming through with something that allows people to save on their own. What's wrong with saving on your own, putting your money where you want it?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Living within your means.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, living within our means.

In 2012, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce submitted a letter to the then Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan, calling on the government to introduce and implement pooled registered pension plans. Also in 2012, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business also urged the government to move ahead on the PRPPs. The federal government passed legislation some time ago establishing the minimum standards that federal PRPPs would have to meet, as well as the administrators of such a plan. It was up to each province to follow up with their own PRPP-enabling legislation. Quebec has launched its version, the Voluntary Retirement Savings Plan, as well as BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Once again, this Liberal government is playing catch-up.

I believe the key elements of this plan is that they're pooled, registered and voluntary. I think it's very important that we have within this country a pension plan that's portable. I think that's one thing that this plan certainly allows. Gone are the days when people worked 35 or 40 years for a company. Companies come and go a lot more, especially under this government where we see payroll taxes go through the roof. All we're seeing, because of

that, are companies moving south, and east and west, where costs are much more in line with the idea of being competitive.

Competitive goes along with voluntary. When people purchase products, people I know—especially when you've got a group of people living in rural areas, where farmers are a little bit close to their dollars—they look for a good deal. Fortunately, not that long ago you could find good deals in Ontario-made products. But now our employers are forced to pay exorbitant payroll taxes, something like the highest on the continent. Energy rates are the highest on the continent. If you look at property taxes, the province of Quebec is ahead of us, but the rest of the continent is less.

You can't constantly expect our businesses—it's like a candy dish. If you need more money, go to our businesses, because they'll never leave. Well, they are leaving. We once had a great manufacturing base in Ontario. Actually, it was so good that it led our country. Now we're sitting here with a manufacturing industry that's just devastated, that's gone, and this government is still trying to live as if they're still there. But when the jobs left, the tax income left as well.

Back to this plan: The pooling allows for lower unit costs and easy access. Registering puts the money in your name. That is acknowledged as such under the law. The voluntary part allows businesses and employees to opt in and out, depending on the circumstances. When we talk about employees opting in but the businesses not—there are many people employed in this province, certainly many people we see in business, making well into the six-digit incomes. They may not have a pension plan, but they are expected to save on their own, and I think they're very capable of doing so.

We look at some of the plans. Our RRSPs are very well participated in. Yes, there is room. But we also have other plans that are available, like the tax-free savings account. There are people who put money in there versus the RRSP because it makes more sense for them tax-wise. Because there's room, that people have not accessed RRSPs—it may be because they're using other plans or it may be that they decided to spend their money elsewhere and possibly purchase a car or a house. A house is considered a great savings plan. Our tax laws have been set up so that when you're retiring, you downsize and you take that money from your residence. It allows you to put that into your retirement.

The voluntary part that allows businesses and employees to opt in and out is very different from what we see with Bill 56, the Ontario registered pension plan, where it's mandatory for essentially all employers without a defined benefit pension plan to contribute.

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I believe the federal government has it right when they say that the time is not right to introduce a major payroll tax on business. They have not ruled this out. They even talked about enhancing the CPP when the economy will support it, and that's not now. We've seen some rough horizons.

Unfortunately, with Ontario being a third of the population of this country, when it's not doing well, the country as a whole suffers. Whether our manufacturers and our employers can stand another payroll tax is very questionable. That's what I think the government is saying. But of course, this Liberal government is very short on money, and I think that's really the motivation behind this plan.

They're having a tough time, and we need to allow these businesses to recover so that they can once again start to expand, hire more employees and provide additional benefits, such as an employee pension plan.

Businesses and associations have expressed great concern over the details of the ORPP, and so I think that we need to look at what some of these concerns are. It's certainly not just my opinion but the sentiments of Ontario small businesses and associations, including hundreds of local chambers of commerce across the province that have created a coalition to deal with the proposed pension plan, the ORPP.

Between the red tape regulations and payroll taxes, the government seems to be on the lookout for ways to make running a business in this province more difficult.

We had the opportunity during break week last week to meet with two of the chambers in my riding. Both presented us with letters that they forwarded to this government with their strong opposition to Bill 56. They asked us to continue to take the message back that it is not good for business and not good for people with jobs. We're looking at 600,000 people who are unemployed today, who will not benefit from this plan. They're unemployed, so they don't contribute.

Because of this plan, we're looking at another 54,000 people who had the ability to save for their own retirement but, with this bill, will lose their jobs, so they won't benefit from this.

And now we're looking at a proposed carbon tax. I know their numbers show there are 5,000 jobs lost, but that's not a realistic number. We're probably looking at hundreds of thousands of jobs, as our neighbours and our competitors aren't looking at the same type of carbon tax—once again, making our employers more uncompetitive.

Climate change is something where we need to look at a coordinated effort. I know that the closing of the coal plants was a novel plan, but when you look at the time and energy we spent on closing five plants—1,200 around the world were opened. I mean, that's not a coordinated plan. That's money and resources—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order: the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: As is the rules of the House, I'd like the member to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. I will give some leniency to the member from Stormont, but please try to come back to the bill within a reasonable amount of time, if you drift a little bit. Thanks.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. I guess I was just going on with the pension plan, Bill 56, that the

government has got, and how we see that as just further draining money away from the people who are out there, making choices on how they spend their money.

I grew up in an area where people—I guess I look at our ancestors, who fought long and hard in many wars to be able to have your choice of where you spent your money. That's why we're supporting this bill, the pooled pension plans, because it is voluntary and it doesn't put stress on people who can't afford, for a period of time, not to be contributing to a pension plan.

When I first got out of university and started working, I had what was considered a fairly good job at the time. I think I started out with \$13,000 a year in 1977, which was a better-than-average job at that time. I didn't put money into a registered pension plan at that time. I couldn't afford it. I was putting money into a registered home ownership plan that they had at that time. I tried to put money down, because I knew my next big investment would likely be a home, which it was.

And now this Bill 56 wouldn't allow me to do that. It would take money out of my pocket and my employer's pocket, which will probably end up being my pocket twice, and won't allow me, when it defers my ability to buy a home—and that home is going to be part of my retirement plan.

Again, it's voluntary. You feel good when you go out and you make some money and you can put it where you want. When the government is in your pocket all the time, it doesn't make you feel very good. I think that's one of the major instances of this.

We talked about the red tape regulations and payroll taxes. The government seems to be on the lookout for ways of running business out of this province. They're looking at energy costs and other initiatives that have deeply affected the way that our businesses are able to operate, if at all. The manufacturing sector is a perfect example of this, as many businesses are packing up and finding more affordable places to do business, or introducing layoffs, such as Caterpillar, Heinz, Stelco, Kellogg's, Kraft, John Deere, GM, Hershey's, Siemens, Campbell Soup, Sears, BlackBerry, Ford, General Mills and Unilever, just to mention a few.

I think the member for Nipissing talked about 2,700 companies that have left since this government came in. That's a trend that I would hope this government is starting to acknowledge and look at—and maybe go down to New York state and go down to Ohio and find out why they left. An exit plan is at least a plan. Find out why they're leaving. They're telling us and they're telling their employees as they lay them off that they just can't afford to do business in Ontario anymore. Those people would want to do business in Ontario because it's a great place to live. Unfortunately, when you can't meet the bottom line, you have no choice.

Recently, our finance critic from North Bay received a letter from a business that he was trying to help. I'll quote part of the letter:

"Thanks for all your help. In the end we decided to pack up and move to the States.

"It was not an easy decision but in the end it was too hard" for our companies to do business.

"Hopefully you can turn things around."

Those are some of the comments we—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough has just joined us and is really loud.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I go down to my local coffee shop on Saturday morning for local business, and sometimes I don't walk in to a very happy person. Every time you turn around, there's a new regulation, a new tax, a hydro bill. Of course, the comment: "You have to manage your hydro bill." Well, he's not able to turn off his fridges on a hot summer day. If he does, he loses everything. People in this province, unfortunately, like to shop during the warmest parts of the day, during daylight hours. You can't change that. Those are costs that they can't mitigate. They can't close up their freezers and say, "Come in at 2 in the morning because it's cheaper to operate."

You look at what we've lost and you can attribute most of it back to this government and its reckless policies. When business is struggling, government should be trying to create incentives for business—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ahem.

Continue.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. When business is struggling, the government should try to create incentives for businesses to stay in the province and thrive. Instead, the Liberals continue to make it difficult to do business in this province. We're looking at the highest energy rates on the continent, the highest payroll taxes on the continent and the second-highest property taxes. Yes, maybe they have the lowest combined corporate taxes, but you have to make a profit before you pay corporate taxes. For the most part, that's the trouble: They aren't making a profit.

We talked about our pension plans, and they depend on buying shares in profitable companies. Of course, it's lucky that we're now allowed to buy more and more shares in foreign companies, because it's harder and harder to find a profitable company, at least in Ontario, which has the majority of companies in this country.

The companies would be happy to pay corporate income taxes, but it would mean that they are paying all their bills, paying their fair share, and actually have something to show for it.

This reminds me of a funny story from back in the 1970s. Growing up in the 1960s on a farm, things weren't always all that great. For the most part, farmers didn't pay taxes. They would have liked to pay taxes, but they didn't make enough money. They worked long, hard days. There was lots of work. In the wintertime, they cut wood to burn because they didn't have money to buy oil.

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In the 1960s, supply management came in, so there was a little more money. I remember about a year after that came in, we bought a larger tractor. It allowed you,

of course, to do more things, and it allowed us to till the land—better crops, a little more money, and now farming is starting to be profitable.

So my uncle, the first year he had to pay income tax—it was a big joke around that somebody actually was rich enough that they had to pay tax. Ray was always kind of witty, so he walked in, and my dad, as he saw him coming up, was saying, "There's the big shot paying the income tax this year." He commented to Ray, and Ray looked at him and said, "For 60 years I've been wishing that someday I'd make enough money to pay tax, and today is the day, so I'm not complaining."

We've come a long way from those days. We've grown to a standard of living that I think we're generally happy with. We're the envy of the world. This government seems to want to take that away from us. And they're taking it away from us by—you know, the income is coming in, but it's going out as taxes. It's being wasted on things like gas plants. It's being wasted on smart meters. People have to pay for that.

So when we're looking at this pension plan, I wonder why they're putting this one out, because the other one is obviously there because they need the money. You look through the government's own literature on the ORPP; they're going to utilize those funds for infrastructure.

Last week, when I sat on the committee for the pension plan, I think it was OPSEU who came in. Their pension plan trust came in, and they were talking about how well they're doing and they were for this plan and they were a combined—not combined benefit but a combined contribution plan. They were saying they were averaging 9% on their return. That was just great. So I asked the question: "You look at this plan. It's going to require you to convert over to this bill. How would you feel? Do you think the government is going to get you 9%?" Are they going to invest in infrastructure and pay 9% back to this plan? Or are they going to likely be—since they're looking at their own benefit, likely to pay more what they can get in the banks, or in the open market, which is, when they're borrowing, somewhere like 2% or 3%.

That's the trouble: You've got two masters here. You got a pension plan that's going to collect money and the government saying they're going after the best return possible, but we're going to use that money for infrastructure, so we're not interested in paying a good return. That should be a big red light to a lot of people in Bill 56, what they're really doing. This is another way of getting some money to run this province, instead of being forthright in telling people where they are.

Next week, or in two weeks, we're going to see a budget come down. I guess it's going to include revenue flow from this Bill 56 because it's money that they can get their hands on, as it will with—they're looking at selling off Hydro One even though Hydro One owes more than it's actually worth. Again, that will be a bill that we'll have to pay through—the hydro rate fees will have to be raised to pay for this because obviously, if you take revenue away from them, they have to pay the debt. Unfortunately, that's one of the things we've seen as

we've seen billions and billions and billions of dollars wasted.

I encourage people to look at retirement. I worry about the plans that we have, whether people can afford it. I don't see Bill 56 helping them because the money is going to go in and it's going to be siphoned off. Hopefully, a government in the future, maybe a PC government, will be able to return the economy so we can pay those bills off in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll take a different tack than the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. This Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, I see as benefiting insurance companies and bankers. I have nothing against bankers. I guess I'm like Stephen Leacock: "When I go into a bank I get rattled. The clerks rattle me; the wickets rattle me; the sight of the money rattles me...."

But more than anything, I get really, really, really rattled when I pick up a copy of the *Globe and Mail* and I see what the banks are paying out in pension money to the senior executives. The Bank of Nova Scotia: Richard Waugh—however you pronounce it—in 2013, retired with \$2 million a year in a pension. Wouldn't I like to have that? The Royal Bank: Gordon Nixon, \$1.75 million in an annual pension. The Bank of Montreal: Bill Downe, \$1 million, but—guess what?—in American funds. Somebody was thinking ahead on that one.

To the Liberals' favourite banker, from the Toronto-Dominion Bank, Ed Clark: He retires on \$2.5 million a year. Here's a guy we all read about, we all hear about, making decisions that are going to affect each and every one of us in Ontario. He's making \$2.5 million a year in a pension. He's telling you guys to bring in a pooled plan. His bank, all banks, all insurance companies, are going to make huge profits selling these things, making commissions, charging fees. The rest of us are paying for the bankers' pensions. There's something wrong with this picture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not sure I'm going to top that, Speaker. I'm not even going to try.

A couple of minutes' comments here from my friend from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: It's debates like this that really show the difference between that particular side of the House and this side of the House—a big difference. They'll say to the public, "I have a pension or I don't have a pension, but you're on your own. Just look after yourself."

Speaker, let me tell you, I've been self-employed all my life and I didn't do very well. I consider myself probably a typical Canadian. I didn't put any money aside because times were tough.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Because you're a Liberal.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Times were tough, Speaker. I'm proud to be a Liberal; very proud.

I do have the Canada Pension Plan, and that's because that's something that was a structure in place. We con-

tributed on a regular basis. I probably would have contributed to another pension plan if the opportunity was there. It wasn't.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are we going to have to pass the hat for you, Lou?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Here is an opportunity. Regardless of which way we go, we're trying to help Canadians, Ontarians—Ontarians, in this case—live a better life when they retire. I'm going to be honest. When I lost the election in 2011, I had to look at things: Where do I go from here? I would have survived, but I had nothing secure.

I guess I would say to my friends on the other side: We're all Canadians and we're all Ontarians, and it's nice to look after our fellow Ontarians. Unfortunately, you don't look at it that way, and it's a sad day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to join the debate, listening to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West saying how he was self-employed all those years and never saved any money. Of course, that's the typical Liberal way, to spend, spend, spend and never save anything. I can understand why they're all into mandatory pensions.

It was interesting in this debate when I listened to the Liberal House leader, Mr. Naqvi, talking in glowing terms of this bill—and I'm supportive of this bill and our party is supportive of it—and saying that it was a necessary leg into the pension formula. Then the member immediately behind him, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, said it was purposely faulty legislation and he just was totally denigrating of this bill. So I don't know what's happening over on the Liberal side of the benches, but they certainly are in a state of fumbling and confusion on this bill.

I would say this: If this Liberal government was indeed focused and interested in people having a good retirement and security in their retirement, maybe they should start looking at how much money they're taking out of people's pockets on a continuing basis: the carbon tax, the WSIB, the HST, the DRC, the eco fees, the increases in licence fees, and on and on and on. They're reaping money out of hard-working people and putting them into a destitute position in this province. Then they come up and say, "We will allow you to pool your pensions."

I'll tell you what: There's nothing left. You've taken it all from them in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West, because this issue is critically important to my community. There was a Vital Signs report that was released earlier in the fall by London Community Foundation. It found a 300% increase in the poverty rate for seniors in my community between 2010 and 2011, which is the latest data that's available from Statistics Canada. So poverty is growing in London among the senior community.

Who are these seniors who are living in poverty? Most of them are women. I think it's time that we in this Legislature put a gender lens on this debate about PRPPs and who is benefiting and who is not benefiting from this legislation.

The Liberal government talks about gender-based analysis, talks about its commitment to a gender lens. If they were serious about applying a gender lens to the issue of women living in poverty in their senior years, they would not be advancing this idea of a PRPP. They would be looking to address some of the systemic issues that cause senior women to live in poverty when they retire.

Senior women are twice as likely to live in poverty as senior men, and this is particularly the case if they are single—and we know that women live longer than men, so they are quite likely to live out their years unattached, living in lone households. Almost one third of elderly women who are living on their own are living below the poverty line.

Women are much more likely than men to rely on income security programs like OAS and GIS. They're not out there buying PRPPs or RRSPs, because of the history, the systemic barriers that they have experienced in their participation in the labour market.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you to the speakers from Windsor–Tecumseh, Northumberland–Quinte West, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and London West.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West talked about being proud to be a Liberal. I know a lot of people last weekend came up and said, “I used to be a Liberal.” They said, “I just can't figure out how anybody today, after what's happened, would feel good saying they voted Liberal.” That says something to what this government has done over the last number of years.

The member from London West has a great point: We're talking about a bill that does not help the 13% of the people who need help, because they don't have jobs. They won't get any benefit from this, because they don't have the money to put in. You should be targeting the people who need help, instead of a scattergun approach that only takes money out of people's pockets.

When you're looking at Bill 56, it's really all about, how can this government get its hands on our money without people really knowing they're doing it?

I tell people that you're talking about collecting pension money and then having the government use it for infrastructure, and what are they going to pay you for a return? Are they going to pay the 9% that OPSEU was very proud about getting? I don't think so.

My company had a defined contribution plan, and I think our pension did quite well. It's something; it's not like in the public service. It's half of what my wife's teacher's pension plan will be—less than half—but it's still a pension plan that's there and it's good enough,

when I've added the other options I had voluntarily, to do something with.

But this plan is going to take the money and then in 30 or 40 years, when we have to start paying out, it will be all of a sudden, “Oh, my God, look at the debt that is in the pension plan”—another debt.

Anyway, thank you, Speaker. I think it's something we should be cautious about.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming students from the PC campus associations of Trent University and Ryerson University today. Rebecca Hubble, Corey Le Blanc, Phil Menecola, Jaskaran Malhi, Alexander Walsh, Zachary Cosek, Evan Kennedy and Callum Haney are with us here.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to welcome and acknowledge the president of CUPE Ontario, Fred Hahn, and his assistant, Wynne Hartviksen, here in the gallery for today's question period. Welcome. Enjoy.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome the family of Colin Bryan, who is a page captain today: his mother, Nicole Cooper; grandmother, Nancy Cooper; brother, Jack Bryan; and sister, Claire Bryan. They're with us this morning to watch the proceedings.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome the past president of the Ontario Dental Association, Dr. Rick Caldwell. Rick, if you wouldn't mind standing up. He was the first star last night in the Ontario Legiskaters game against the ODA, the starting goaltender in an 8-6 win for the dentists, but we will get you next year, Rick.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: With thanks to my colleague from London–Fanshawe, who provided me with the names of folks who are here with the Parkinson Society today: Jared Zaifman, John Parkhurst and Stan Marshall, who are here today. I met them.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted: We have at least three Londoners in the gallery today. Councillor Jared Zaifman, who has recently been elected to city council, is here with the Parkinson Society; Dr. Peter Fendrich, a friend and a dentist in London; and Dr. Jack McLister, another constituent of mine and the incoming president of the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Dr. Dave Jones, who's here from Thames Centre today. He was an excellent dentist. He's here to tell us about how we can improve dentistry throughout Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh, as long as he doesn't step on my introductions.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good morning, Speaker; thank you. I'd like to introduce a friend of mine from the town

of Tecumseh. Dr. Charles Frank is here today. Charles is a member of the Ontario Dental Association's executive.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It is a pleasure for me to introduce, from the Parkinson Society of Ontario, one of my constituents, Mr. Lloyd Cohen, and also Mr. Alan Muir. I had the great pleasure of meeting them this morning.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery, Jack and Stella Pulkinghorn, who are the recipients of an MPP luncheon at Queen's Park. We're happy to have them here. Jack and Stella, please stand.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope everyone will join me in welcoming Dr. Kerr Banduk, a dentist from Kitchener-Waterloo, who's here today with the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to welcome a friend of mine—whom the Speaker will introduce by title very shortly—making his first visit to Queen's Park: Mr. Mauricio Toussaint.

I see, over in the west members' gallery, two dentist friends of mine: Dr. Pravir Patel and Dr. Lisa Bentley. Welcome.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I think a lot of you know that my granddaughter, Madison Rynard, is a page here. But joining us today is her dad, Derek Rynard; his partner, Kristian Dunkin; and a business partner, Julian Stourton, who is here from Switzerland and doing business in Toronto.

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a very special guest today. She's a student in my riding at St. Thomas More. I'd like to welcome Danielle Kydd.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to wish a happy birthday to someone very special who's with us in the chamber today: my niece Alexandra Oakes, who also happens to be the Minister of Northern Development and Mines' legislative assistant. Again, I'd like to wish her a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Me?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes. Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm sorry, Speaker.

I'd like to introduce Dr. Blake Clemes. He's with the Ontario Dental Association, and he's from my riding of Perth-Wellington.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My intention is to get everybody in, so if we do this quickly, we'll take care of everyone's introductions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome Dr. Visconti, a dentist from Timmins.

Hon. Bill Mauro: A very special guest for me is here today in the east members' gallery: My son Dustin Mauro is here visiting from Thunder Bay.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to welcome Dr. David Stevenson here to the gallery today. Of course, David is a fine dentist in Carleton Place and plays on the—he beat us last night in that hockey game. But he's a great dentist anyway.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad to hear that the announcement is that the dentists didn't have to do any work after the hockey game.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have three guests today. I'd like to introduce Ryan Tripp. He is previously from my riding, in Levack, but he now lives in Muskoka. He is with the Parkinson Society of Ontario. He's actually an ambassador for the World Parkinson Congress coming up.

Debbie Davis is the CEO of the Parkinson Society. As well, A.B. Rustin is a board member with the Parkinson Society. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome to the gallery today a wonderful dentist in my riding, Dr. Waji Khan. Welcome.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to introduce my co-op student from Thornlea high school, Alex Dover—Alex, give us a little wave—and two interns from CJPAC, Willem Hart from my riding, and his friend Andrew Vittas. Nice to see you.

Today I'm expecting some dentists as well. From my executive, I have Dr. Bruce Rubin, and then there's his colleague Dr. Homa Jammehdiabadi, and Mr. Tom Magyarody.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm also pleased to welcome my own dentist, Dr. Steve Lipinski, and, as well, Dr. Larry Tenaschuk, who are here in the east members' gallery.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, please join me in welcoming Dr. Lisa Bentley from the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce Dr. David Brown, an orthodontist from Newmarket, in my riding, here today with the ODA.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature a long-time friend of mine and a heck of a ball player, Dr. Art Worth from Chatham-Kent. He's also a former president of the ODA.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce Dr. Pravir Patel, who's from my riding of Brampton-Springdale.

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a couple of guests I want to introduce. First, on behalf of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade: The page captain today is Jae Min Han. His parents are here today: Heather Kang and Matthew Han. They're in the public gallery. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park, as well as Dr. Raffy Chouljian, who is my constituent in Scarborough-Agincourt. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It's my pleasure to welcome and acknowledge two dentists with the Ontario Dental Association, from Halton and Oakville. Here today, as you heard earlier, is Dr. Larry Tenaschuk, and also Dr. Kelvin Fung. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome Dr. Roger Howard, who is in the members' gallery. He's a dentist from my riding of Ottawa South.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to recognize my good friend Fred Hahn, who's here in the gallery from CUPE Ontario. I've never seen Fred wear a tie before; I never

knew he could pass for a banker, ever. And also, Wynne Hartviksen: Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome one of my local dentists, Dr. Sara Werb, to Queen's Park. She's a member of the Ontario Dental Association.

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Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome Dr. Ivan Hrabowsky from the city of St. Catharines—a long-time dentist and a proud member of the ODA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We could actually do this instead of question period, if you want.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That wasn't a unanimous consent.

We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, the Consul General of Mexico in Toronto, Mr. Mauricio Toussaint. We welcome you to your posting. Thank you for being here with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOME CARE

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, approximately 350,000 people over the age of 65 are currently receiving home care services in Ontario, which of course keeps them out of hospital. Health care providers, stakeholders and, most importantly, patients and their families, however, have told you that our home care system is broken. As it stands, home care services in Ontario are inadequate and inconsistent at best, and with an aging population and your fiscal mismanagement, nobody believes that the system will be equipped to handle future need.

Service quality and accessibility continues to deteriorate. Premier, how much longer do seniors and their families have to wait for you to make the necessary changes to our home care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment on specifics, but I want to just say to the member opposite, as I have said many times in this House, that we are in a transition period. There's no doubt about that. The way health care has been delivered in the past—in the face of an aging demographic and different demands from people in terms of the kind of care they want and where they want it, there have to be changes made.

One of the reasons that we put money in last year's budget to increase the wages of personal support workers was exactly the reason the member opposite is talking about: We need a more stable sector. We need that part of the health care workforce to have more reliable income and to have enough hours and enough stability in their job to be able to do the job.

I will note that the member opposite never supported any of those initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: Premier, the fact of the matter is, our population is aging rapidly. Your lead expert, Gail Donner, the former dean of nursing at the University of Toronto, said in her recent report *Bringing Care Home*, "Everyone ... is frustrated with a system that fails to meet the needs of clients and families ... no one thinks the status quo is an option."

This frustration is being felt by the 75-year-old who cannot get a personal support worker following a hip replacement. This frustration is felt by a daughter trying to get physiotherapy for her father who recently suffered a stroke. This frustration is being felt by the thousands of people who cannot get the home care services that they need because of your inaction and the web of bureaucracy that your government has created. Premier, why do you continue to fail these families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, let me just say that one of the reasons we put money into the budget last year to increase personal support worker salaries and one of the reasons we put \$270 million more into the budget for home care is because we know that we're in a transition and we need to make those changes. So we will continue to make changes.

I would note that the member opposite, who is in the middle of a leadership race, has said that she will cut a billion dollars out of the budget. That means public services would have to be cut. That means health care costs would have to go down, Mr. Speaker. I just think the member needs to recognize that she can't have it both ways.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I would appreciate quiet when a question is put and quiet when an answer is put.

Wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say, you can't have it both ways. You can't, on the one hand, say there needs to be more change and more investment and, on the other hand, say you're going to make a tax cut that will take a billion dollars out of the system.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order, and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Speaker, I would appreciate if the Premier would stop trying to put words in my mouth that I never said.

However, the Premier's own expert panel has highlighted that the two biggest issues with our home care system are excessive bureaucracy and a lack of accountability for system outcomes. Premier, this is nothing new. You've heard this for years and years from experts, stakeholders and, most importantly, from patients and their families, yet you continue to ignore the obvious.

Premier, the PC caucus has so far given you two ideas that you could put into a responsible budget. Our third ask is quite simple: Will you follow the recommendations of the Donner report, which you have endorsed? Will you make the functional changes to our system that we need in order to improve patient care? Will you tie funding to the community care access centres so that we can have improved outcomes and patient results? Will you do that, Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are doing all of those things. We are increasing our investments in home and community care: \$270 million this year and approximately the same amount next year in addition and the third year as well. That's precisely why we had Gail Donner and a team of experts come together. They presented their report to me at the end of January.

We have endorsed their recommendations. I have endorsed their recommendations on behalf of the government and indicated that it will guide our decisions moving forward. I'm working hard with the ministry right now as we speak to actually put the changes in place which will further strengthen the home and community care that we provide to all Ontarians, including our seniors.

But we've done many other things in the past several years. We've increased our investments in physiotherapy, where 200,000 more seniors are getting physiotherapy or exercise services. We're increasing investments through a whole variety of areas to actually make sure that seniors—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Two weeks ago, Minister, I raised the issue of debt at the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. The OEFC has \$27 billion in outstanding debt largely paid for by Hydro One revenue—revenue that will be lost if you sell Hydro One.

But Minister, there's a larger problem here than just a loss of revenue. The entire value of Hydro One is already mortgaged to the OEFC. All \$16 billion of Hydro One's value has already been claimed by the OEFC to pay down its debt. That's why the law requires that all sale proceeds from any share of Hydro One must go to pay down the electricity debt.

Minister, how can you sell any part of Hydro One given that it is already fully mortgaged?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The reason that Ontarians are still paying for stranded debt is because of the mess that

the PC government put us in. We have been open and transparent in getting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've been very open and transparent about getting it reduced. As a result we have been reducing the stranded debt—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm prepared to get my exercise.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As a result of the work that Ontarians have been doing in getting it reduced, and as we have said and as we have outlined every year in our fall economic statement and in our budget, we've detailed how that's being done. We have committed by the end of this year to remove the residual stranded debt fees paid by residential users by the end of this year, and so we'll continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Minister of Energy or whatever minister wants to start telling the truth over there—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, to the Minister of Energy: When you sell your house and it's mortgaged to the bank, you can't pocket the sale price and refuse to pay off the mortgage. If you did that, you'd be charged with fraud. Any profit from a sale of Hydro One has already been mortgaged. That profit is owed to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.—Hydro One's banker.

Minister, your government keeps talking about unlocking the value of government assets—

Hon. Michael Coteau: Like the 407.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Will you finally admit that all of the value in Hydro One, the biggest asset you plan on putting on the auction block, is completely mortgaged already to the OEFC? It's already spoken for, Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the leftover of Ontario Hydro is OEFC. What did the PCs leave OEFC? Debt. That's all that has been left over.

As a result, we have been taking steps to remove that debt from the ratepayer. In fact, the approach has been working. Last year, there was about \$1.5 billion in further reduction of stranded debt. This is the 10th consecutive year that stranded debt has been reduced—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And over the last number of years, it has gone down by \$10.8 billion. But Mr. Speaker, the reason stranded debt had even gone up and the residual portion of stranded debt went up is because they themselves artificially froze the rates because they went up by 30%, which caused the residual stranded debt to go up even higher. We're taking corrective action to make sure that it gets removed from the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You need a real good briefing on the history of hydro in this province because you don't know what you're talking about.

There was \$38 billion. The reason I broke up hydro is that it had \$38 billion in debt, Minister, and we couldn't continue to go that way. We got that debt down to a residual stranded debt of \$7.8 billion.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order—second time.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I don't know how in the world you guys, over 12 years, brought it back up to \$27 billion, but I'm bloody well going to find out one of these days. We've asked the auditor to look into that, and we're going to find out. I suspect a lot of it is your high-priced windmills and your Green Energy Act, which is driving jobs out of the province and prices up.

So, Minister, will you finally tell—be honest with the people of Ontario: What are you going to do with the \$27 billion in debt? Are you going to leave it for the rate-payers and taxpayers of the future to pay for? That will mean skyrocketing hydro rates again—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Start the clock.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact and I am glad that the member opposite has admitted that he left such a substantial debt at the OEFC as a result of the mess that they put forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia—Lambton will come to order. I'm going to fast-track the names that I take.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Including anyone interjecting while I'm speaking.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: During those days, when the economy was actually prospering, not only they did they try and mess up the hydro deal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order—second time.

Hon. Charles Sousa:—they messed up the sale of the 407 and still left a deficit of \$5.6 billion in our coffers, which we had to correct since going forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In 2003, when the Premier first won her seat, her leader, Dalton McGuinty, took a progressive stand, calling the sale of Hydro One “a disaster for consumers.” More than a decade later, the Liberals have made a sharp turn to the right. Now they're the ones planning to privatize Hydro One.

My question is: Who is the right-wing ideologue in the Liberal cabinet that is pushing to privatize Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just remind the leader of the third party first of all of the reason that we undertook a review of the assets. The sole reason that we wanted to do that is that we knew that investing in new assets, investing in new infrastructure—transit, roads, bridges—around the province is necessary in order for our economy to thrive.

I would say secondly that the leader of the third party took a look at what we said we were going to do and then ran on it, because part of her fiscal assumptions, part of her investment assumptions in her platform were exactly the assumptions that were in our budget and our platform.

I would say to the leader of the third party, we are now executing that review because we know that making the investments that we committed to is necessary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The decision to privatize Hydro One marks a hard right turn. The Premier has made a right turn that is so hard, she's now got her back to Ontarians.

The Premier must know deep down that privatizing Hydro One is a short-sighted—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. It goes both ways.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: However, after more than 10 years of taking the progressive position that Hydro One should remain in public hands, the Liberals have decided it's time for them to privatize even more of our hydro system than Mike Harris and Ernie Eves managed to.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians what's behind her sharp right turn towards privatization?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I completely understand why the leader of the third party would want to get into an ideological debate right now, because it's necessary for her to reposition herself as a progressive. She lost that brand completely when she decided not to support a budget that was going to invest in the people and the infrastructure of this province.

Having not governed ideologically, I have never suggested that ideology or polling is the way that I would

govern. I made practical decisions, and we put those into our budget and we put those into our platform. At this point, what I will say to the leader of the third party is that we're sticking to those decisions that we made. We're sticking to those practical solutions to the problems that are confronting us as an economy and as a province right now.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier has insisted over and over again that she is leading the most progressive government since the dawn of humanity, yet she is turning harder right than Ernie Eves and Mike Harris. Even Ernie Eves backed off the plan to sell off Hydro One.

Can the Premier square that circle for us today? Can she explain how going further right than Ernie Eves and Mike Harris is possibly in any way progressive and what she claims to be a progressive direction that the Liberals are supposed to have taken?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I would just say to the leader of the third party that she is a member of this Legislature, along with her caucus, who didn't support a minimum wage hike, who didn't support our pension plan, who in fact, as recently as the last couple of days, can't actually decide whether she supports fighting climate change or not.

I would say to the leader of the third party, if you want to look at practical solutions, that's great. But if you want to have a conversation about ideology, you're going to be on the losing end of that every time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. You know, I wouldn't be surprised if Ontarians are getting déjà vu all over again. Their government has made a right-wing decision to sell Hydro One. They were never consulted about that decision and they were never asked whether they wanted higher hydro bills and the loss of a very strategic asset that belongs to them. Now, according to CUPE and some legal experts, the Premier's plan might not even be legal. It is 2002 all over again.

How did the Premier lose her way?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I say to the leader of the third party that I understand why she's trying to find her way, because the initiatives that we've taken on this side of the House to invest in infrastructure, to put in place a retirement pension plan, to move on climate change—I know that waffling on those and not having a position on those has been very painful for her.

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What I will say to her is that we ran on the necessity to review the assets of this province, to ensure that we can invest in new assets. We are taking a practical approach

to that. Ed Clark is bringing out the details shortly. He will be talking about how we can approach these things in a way that will preserve the interests of the people of Ontario, that will preserve ownership and will preserve the interests in terms of regulatory and price control.

The leader of the third party hasn't seen those details. We'll wait until the details are out, and then she can comment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think it's important to talk to Ontarians for a minute. The Liberal government—the Premier—is planning to sell off your Hydro One. It's going to mean that your electricity bills are going to go up.

It's very possible, according to legal experts, that in fact her plan is not even legal here in the province of Ontario. Once we privatize Hydro One—let's not forget—there are no do-overs; there are no mulligans. That is going to be a situation that we can never take back. Hydro One—your Hydro One—will be gone forever. It's a bad deal for every single Ontarian.

Can the Premier tell the people of Ontario how it is that she is going to be ramming this bad deal down the throats of Ontarians without even once asking them what they think about this idea?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, the leader of the third party has absolutely no idea what we are going to do. She has no details, because those announcements have not been made. Ed Clark and his group of experts are going to be bringing forward a report, and we will, at that point, have that discussion.

But I will say to the member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing a familiar voice that I can't quite see, and I know that if I could find him, he would know that I would tell him to come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll say to the member opposite that she has put forward no plan to make the investments that we know are necessary in this province. She has come forward with no practical solutions to the infrastructure deficit that we're facing. She has no plan for how we can build the roads and the bridges and the infrastructure and the transit that we need in this province if our economy is going to thrive—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier was first elected on a plan to keep Hydro One in public hands. She knows that selling Hydro One will mean a disaster for consumers. She knows this fundamentally. She knows that what she is doing might not even be legal. She knows that it's a short-term decision that will have long-term aftershocks for people and businesses across Ontario, not only soon but for generations to come.

Worst of all, the Premier has never asked Ontarians, not once, what they think about this plan, and now she's treating it like it's a done deal.

Will the Premier shut down the right-wing ideologues who are driving this and do the right thing for Ontarians?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do not believe—nor does anyone who has looked at the economy of Ontario, nor do people who are looking to invest in Ontario—unless we invest in infrastructure in this province, that we will be able to compete in the 21st century. We're just not going to be able to. And so in our platform when we ran, we said that we are going to look at the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario and we are going to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Maybe I should stay standing all the time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are going to ask people with experience to look at those assets and to work with us, to optimize the value of those assets, so that we can invest in the infrastructure and the assets that are needed for the 21st century.

What we're not going to do is sell off, the way the 407 was sold off, so that there would be no future return—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is warned.

Your time is up. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I have a question to the Premier: Premier, just 10 months ago, you told Ontarians very clearly that a carbon tax wasn't in your plan. Then, just this week, you introduced a carbon pricing scheme that you yourself admitted was a tax on everything. Now Ontario's independent petroleum marketers are sounding the alarm bell that the impact of your carbon tax will actually drive up prices at the pump much higher than you've claimed.

You clearly know the impact of your scheme, but you've told Ontarians they must wait another six months for the details.

Premier, why do you think that Ontarians don't deserve to have the truth about your job-killing carbon tax today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wish that more members of this Legislature had had the opportunity to be with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and I in Quebec over the last couple of days, because had they been there, they would have heard leaders from across this country, from every province—with the exception of Alberta and PEI, because they're in elections—from all party stripes, saying that it is critical that we move now, Mr. Speaker. It is important that we move to do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And it's critical not for political reasons, not for partisan reasons; it's for the future of the planet, it's for the future of our children and

our grandchildren, to make sure that we have a sustainable economy and a sustainable environment going forward. That's what this is about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Premier, you know it's not about the environment. It's really about the money.

No one believes you anymore, Premier. You say a carbon tax is not in your plan, then we find out it is. You've rolled out the bait and switch that the tax will be reinvested in transit, when other reports indicate that you've not determined whether it will actually flow into general revenues.

Premier, you can't tell us where the money is going because you're making it up as you go. You can't tell us the cost because you have no idea of the cost—to motorists, to industry, to consumers. You just know that after driving us into debt, this is your ticket to raise revenue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I need to hear it as much as I need to hear the answer.

Please finish.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll repeat that line just so you do get to hear it: You just know that after driving us into debt, this is your ticket to raise revenue on the backs of hard-working Ontarians.

Premier, will you do the right thing today and provide Ontarians with the details on how much the job-killing carbon tax is going to cost those hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Actually, we're now into a six-month design process, so we're looking for input from the members opposite, and we have lots of experience to go on. This will be a very democratic and fair process.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I'm perplexed that a member of the official opposition would be asking such a question, because this isn't the first—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, I've been hearing things I'm not appreciating, so the member from Lanark will come to order.

The member for Kitchener—Conestoga: The question was asked. Listen to the answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: So not only is this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to tolerate responses.

Interjection: Sounds like a warning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

This is precisely the reason why I get emails asking me why we can't get control here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's you, not me.

Any member has an opportunity to withdraw at any time.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully I can give my answer, because I think the member deserves an answer on this.

We're a little perplexed, because this isn't the first cap-and-trade system in Ontario; this is the third. We have cap and trade on NO_x. We have cap and trade on SO_x. And what party introduced those? It was brought over there. So there's the cap-and-trade party, Mr. Speaker. Quebec, Alberta—it's amazing. And they don't read, because if—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sit.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Today, legal experts came to Queen's Park and told Ontarians that the Liberal plan to privatize Hydro One probably isn't legal. Public sector workers who believe in public ownership have made it clear they are going to fight the Liberals in court on this.

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Can the Premier tell Ontarians whether she is planning to wage a long, expensive legal battle with public money, or is she going to change the laws of the land just so she can privatize Hydro One, leaving Ontarians with higher bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: On behalf of the people of Ontario, the government is Hydro One's sole shareholder. As with a shareholder, the province has a right to broaden the ownership of Hydro One.

Following the lower court decision in 2002, the government passed legislation that amended the Electricity Act that clarified its position. The Electricity Act, 1998, was amended to repeal section 48.1 and replace it with section 49(1), which authorizes the minister to "acquire, hold, dispose of and otherwise deal with securities or debt obligations of, or any ... interest in, Hydro One" or on its subsidiaries.

So finding ways to generate revenue to help Ontario invest in its long-term infrastructure needs is badly needed for highways, transit, projects like the Ring of Fire, and other things that we must replace. This is an opportunity to realize on the true potential of Hydro One, to reinvest those assets where necessary. We're doing it legally and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: I want to read something from the legal opinion released today: Experts say, "[T]here are ... grounds to challenge a decision by the Minister of Energy to sell securities, debt or any provincial interest in Hydro One as being an unreasonable or irrational exercise of the minister's discretion under the" act.

According to these experts, selling 60% of Hydro One's distribution assets would actually reduce the province's income by \$133 million per year.

The Premier's plan is irrational. It's bad for families and businesses. It's bad for economic growth. It's bad for energy conservation and a green economy. It will actually mean less money for investments in hospitals, schools and roads.

Will the Premier pull the plug on this unreasonable and irrational plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This particular issue has been raised over the course of the last day or so, and in every single case, the so-called legal opinion has said "may" or "might be illegal."

The critic on the other side talks about the plan that we have. Mr. Speaker, there is no plan that's been put out there. We have a concept we've been working on. There is no particular plan. There are no details upon which any lawyer can make an opinion based on not having seen what we're going to be doing.

We're broadening the ownership in Hydro One. We're limiting other shareholders to less than 10% if we go forward with any deal. The ratepayer will be protected; the taxpayers of Ontario will be protected. It will be done legally, properly, on behalf of the people of Ontario.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Toyota has been a great partner and contributor to Ontario's economy since first opening here almost 30 years ago. Since that time, they have invested almost \$7 billion, creating thousands of jobs. To remind the House, Cambridge is home to the only Lexus plant outside of Japan, a testament to the quality of Ontario's auto manufacturing sector. Toyota has been a staple of my community in Cambridge for almost 30 years. Not only Cambridge's largest employer, Toyota has given much back to my community.

Just as recently as 2012, Toyota announced that it was investing over \$100 million to increase Lexus RX capacity at its Cambridge assembly plant.

Through you, Speaker, would the minister please update the House on the announcement that Toyota just made today?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. This is indeed good news today for Cambridge, good news for Ontario's auto sector. Once again, we have an auto sector partner that is going to be making some very significant investments here in Ontario. We've been assured with today's announcement that, in fact, the worker footprint in Cambridge and Woodstock and in Ontario will remain totally intact.

We've also received assurances that, indeed, further investments are going to be made in those plants to ramp them up—this is the good news—so that they will, by 2019, be able to manufacture some higher-end vehicles in those plants. That is better value for manufacturing here in Ontario. What it speaks to is the fact that we have some of the best-quality workers and some of the best-quality plants here in Ontario. That's why Ontario is being used—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the minister for that update. Toyota's Ontario plants have won 12 J.D. Power quality awards, including the 2014 platinum award for the highest quality among assembly plants worldwide. Toyota's Cambridge facility has received more awards than any other assembly plant in the world. I am extremely proud of the work that's being done in my community, and I know that the employees at Toyota take a lot of pride in their work.

As I understand it, Toyota is not the only Ontario auto manufacturer that has made recent announcements. Through you, Speaker, would the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please inform the House of new developments in Ontario's auto sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: While we recognize that the environment for auto investments remains very competitive, since November we've seen \$4 billion of investment right across the province: from Alliston, where we saw an \$857-million investment from Honda; to Linamar in Guelph, where we saw a half-billion-dollar investment by Linamar; to Markham, where they're building the sexiest car in North America, the Ford GT, which is an incredibly innovative car that they're now building in Markham; to a \$2-billion investment in Windsor by Chrysler, which is great news; and, indeed, this announcement by Toyota that they're going to continue to invest in Ontario and build even higher-end vehicles here in this province. It's great news for the auto sector.

We still have lots of work to do. We're going to work tirelessly to keep building this sector in this province.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. Millions of Ontarians with workplace pension plans are facing uncertainty. You have created this uncertainty. By ignoring the concerns of the deputations at committee, people are left with no answers. Ontarians don't know who will be forced into your plan and who will be exempt. People need to know; businesses need to know. It is time that you treat Ontarians with the respect that they deserve and stop running from the details. Premier, the question: Who is in and who is out?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. It is an extremely important

question that we're asking ourselves about the future of this province and how people are going to be able to afford their retirement.

I have visited 10 communities across this province, talking to people in round tables and in stakeholder forums. What people are telling us is that they are concerned about their retirement. Two thirds of workers in Ontario do not have a pension plan. When we look at the private sector, it's at 28%.

I want to actually thank the efforts of the committee for their work in looking at the framework legislation in Bill 56, which sets out the government's commitment to implementing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan by January 2017. This is about the future of this province. This is about people affording their retirement in a 21st-century economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Ontarians need a mutually acceptable definition of "comparable," a definition to provide certainty. They need to know how your legislation will affect their future. Your refusal to consider amendments to your proposal contributes to the uncertainty. Without concise, transparent details, Ontarians fear the consequences of this legislation.

Ontarians want to know what pension plans you consider good enough to be exempt from the Ontario registered pension plan. When are Ontarians going to have the confidence that their defined contribution workplace pension plans will be safe?

1120

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: In fact, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is about providing more certainty for the retirement futures of the people of this province. This is about ensuring that when people retire, they have adequate income for life and that they can continue to spend and consume in their communities that rely so much on retirement and pension income.

The member opposite knows full well that we actually accepted an amendment from your party for Bill 56, so we are working on the details of this plan. The ministry officials are reviewing all of the submissions that have come in through our consultation process, which has gone right across this province, asking the people of Ontario.

You're absolutely right: It is about assuring people that when they retire, they can retire with security and with dignity. That's what the ORPP is all about.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Premier: Yesterday, the Liberal finance minister was asked about whether he'd release the full Clark report, but he wouldn't give a simple answer, let alone a sophisticated answer, to this important question.

Will the Premier commit to making all of Ed Clark's recommendations public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Premier's hard turn to the right and her plan to privatize hydro makes it clear that she doesn't care about good—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please put your supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much.

Again to the Premier: The Premier's hard turn to the right and her plan to privatize hydro makes it clear that she doesn't care about good or fair policy or even what's in the best interests of the people of this province. She only cares about putting politics first and the short-term interests of the Liberal Party.

It's clear that the Liberals don't want to take any responsibility for the privatization of Hydro One or public utilities.

We're hearing that the Clark report might come out on Thursday. We hear that we might hear everything, but you can't blame the people of this province for having doubts. In last year's budget, they snuck in cuts to hospitals and education.

Will the Premier promise in this House that all of Ed Clark's recommendations will be released for full public scrutiny in a single report tomorrow?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My answer is yes, again, that all of the recommendations will be made public.

But I just want to go back to the genesis of this whole conversation. What this is about is making sure that we have the capacity to invest in the infrastructure that is needed in this province. That's the starting point for this discussion.

I know, and I think the member opposite knows—she lives in a part of this province that needs more transit. She knows that in her region, there needs to be more connectivity to Toronto. She knows that the businesses and the innovators in the Kitchener-Waterloo region want to be able to move back and forth from Toronto. She knows that in order for that to happen, there has to be more investment in public transit.

That's what this is about. That's the solution that we're looking for. The report's recommendations will be made public.

POVERTY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, poverty is an issue of concern for many in the province, including the residents in my riding of Halton. In fact, it's estimated that one in 10 people are affected by poverty in my riding. Groups like Poverty Free Halton, Community Development Halton and the Halton Poverty Roundtable are working hard to address local poverty issues through a series of initiatives, including building social awareness and calling for increased

engagement from the local business community. But more can always be done. That's why I'm proud that our government launched Ontario's second Poverty Reduction Strategy in September.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is our government doing to ensure that we build on local solutions to reach people battling poverty?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the fantastic member from Halton for this question.

Reducing poverty has been an important priority for this government since our election in 2003. We are making a real difference in the lives of people, but we know that we are just beginning this journey. There is much more work ahead of us.

We also know that fighting poverty is not just a top-down initiative. I've always said that we need all hands on deck. We need all levels of government. We need community organizations. We need the business community and the non-profit sector. All of us need to work together to really make a difference.

I also know that poverty looks different in different parts of this great province. That's why we've announced the launch of the Local Poverty Reduction Fund: \$50 million over six years to support grassroots partners as they help lift people out of poverty. It will fund innovative programs that target groups disproportionately affected by poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

My constituents in Halton will be happy to know that the government is partnering with different communities to combat poverty. Local organizations have taken innovative steps to educate residents and leverage community assets to maximize poverty reduction strategies. The Halton Sport Leadership Program, for example, is a program that empowers young people facing economic hardships and teaches the skills required to enter the job market. By working with organizations like these, we can help people become healthier and ready for employment.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How can organizations apply for the Local Poverty Reduction Fund?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Last week, with the MPP from Northumberland-Quinte West, we launched the first part of a two-stage application process for the Local Poverty Reduction Fund. Right now, we're inviting organizations to submit an expression of interest for a sustainable poverty reduction project that they're interested in evaluating. In May, there will be a formal call for proposals to determine the first round of community organizations to access the fund.

A wide variety of groups are eligible to apply: not-for-profit organizations, registered charities and aboriginal communities. Fostering collaborative partnerships across Ontario and building a body of evidence to guide future decisions are invaluable in our collective poverty reduction efforts and a key component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. I especially look forward to seeing what

comes out of the great community of Halton, who are real leaders in this.

ALCOHOL LEGISLATION

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is to the Minister of Finance. Back on February 26, the House passed my bill, the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, at second reading, with support from the government and the official opposition members. However, when the bill could have been given hearings at committee so that some of Ontario's great small businesses like our craft breweries, our cideries and our wineries could be given a chance to comment on the reforms they want to see in the beverage alcohol sector, the government blocked it.

Minister, once the standing committee is done dealing with Bill 40, will you commit to giving hearings to the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act so that we can have a public discussion here in the Legislature where it belongs and not just in Ed Clark's office?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I find that question really odd because I think the member opposite knows, and I'm sure his House leader will remind him, that these are issues that are discussed either in committee or among the House leaders. If his House leader wants to talk about this particular issue, I'm sure he knows where to find me as the government House leader, and we can have that conversation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, I'm not asking to pass the bill; what I'm asking for is that any reform to the beverage alcohol sector actually receive separate debate from the massive government omnibus bill that is on its way. Hundreds of Ontario small businesses in the craft beer, wine and spirit sector depend on these reforms to show both how they can sell their product and remove red tape from the procedure, especially in areas like transportation and warehousing.

What I'm asking is: Will you commit to giving my bill committee hearings so that these businesses can actually speak their piece to MPPs in committee, or will you continue to keep this process secret and wait for the next edict to come down in Ed Clark's report?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Clearly, Speaker, I think if anybody is not being kept in the loop, it's the member opposite by his own House leader. Maybe they want to have a change.

1130

Speaker, in all seriousness, we know that changes need to be made in the beer sector in the province of Ontario. The Minister of Finance has spoken to it many times. We also know that Mr. Clark is looking into that issue, and he will be releasing his report shortly. I encourage all members to wait for the results of the recommendations that will come out of Mr. Clark's report. Of course, the Minister of Finance will be speaking to it as well next Thursday in his budget. That will allow for

us to have sufficient conversation on this very important topic. We look forward to Mr. Clark's report.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. The province of Ontario has vital interests on Toronto's waterfront. Our stake in Waterfront Toronto is worth more than a billion dollars, and we're investing millions in a new urban park at Ontario Place. The province also has an interest in protecting the ecological health of Lake Ontario.

Ports Toronto recently revealed plans for Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport that would allow large jets and a massive expansion of the airport infrastructure and operations. Torontonians are extremely concerned about the impact of these proposed plans on the city's waterfront revitalization, Ontario Place and Lake Ontario.

These plans are proceeding based on a pseudo-"environmental" assessment that has no legal recognition under the federal or the provincial environmental assessment acts. Will the government protect provincial interests on Toronto's waterfront and insist on a proper, legal environmental assessment?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm very pleased to get the question from the member opposite, and I appreciate her sincere concern.

The city of Toronto is the authority responsible for this and for zoning and for the waterfront. Having been a mayor, I have always been very happy when provincial governments did not try to second-guess my role or that of my city council, and we're not about to do that. We'll allow the proper environmental assessment process to go through. We'll look to the city council for proper stewardship, because we trust that Mayor Tory and his council have this well in hand.

As a party to the Waterfront Toronto agreement, we will continue to support the waterfront plan that we signed with the other two orders of government, which this government is very important to.

We're also happy and pleased with the over \$500 million that we have invested, the investments we made in George Brown and in the waterfront parks that we're making right now, that my colleagues are making. We will continue to make those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Minister of the Environment: In fact, progressive councillors are looking to you for action, Mr. Minister.

Also, of course, he knows that airports fall under federal jurisdiction, but that does not justify silence from the provincial government, not when Ontario's interests are threatened. That's what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker: Ontario's interests. In fact, under section 32 of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the provincial government may substitute a provincial EA process to ensure that provincial interests are properly addressed.

Prominent Torontonians—Paul Bedford, David Crombie, Jack Diamond, Anne Golden and Ken Greenberg—

as well as community groups like NoJetsTO and Code-BlueTO have pointed out that Ports Toronto's phony review will not give Torontonians the facts they need.

With so many vital provincial interests at stake, will the government end its silence, stand up for Toronto's waterfront and Toronto, and get that environmental assessment done—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This government is doing more than standing up for Toronto's waterfront. It is doing unprecedented investments, and anyone—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We're laying over the Pan Am Games, which my colleague added.

There is more exciting stuff happening on the Toronto waterfront since we were elected than in the entire history of this province. We're very proud of that.

I also know my city councillors, Councillor McConnell and Councillor Wong-Tam. I have an excellent relationship with them. Neither of them has phoned me and said, "Minister, we want the provincial government to substitute an alternative process to the federal and municipal process"—none of them. We have no request from the mayor; we have no request from council. Maybe the third party thinks that the provincial government should insert their politics and their political agenda into municipal politics or the waterfront, but we don't.

We also have a very clear environmental assessment process that asks the Minister of the Environment to stay out of politicizing it and let the public servants do a fair-minded, evidence-based review. My ministry is already doing that, and they will complete that work.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, many people in my community and communities across this province may not be aware of the risks carbon monoxide poses to their families and loved ones.

Carbon monoxide is an odourless, colourless gas that is often referred to as the silent killer. More than 50 people in Canada die from carbon monoxide poisoning each year, but the real tragedy is that each and every one of these deaths is preventable.

Today, new regulations around the use of carbon monoxide alarms in multi-unit dwellings come into force. With the new rules in place, we'll be able to better protect Ontarians from this silent killer.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Can the minister please explain this new regulation and share with us how it could save lives in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Northumberland—Quinte West for raising such an important issue.

As the member mentioned, carbon monoxide gas is a silent killer that continues to claim too many lives in this province. Speaker, I want to thank you and the member

from Oxford for your leadership on this very important issue.

As of today, carbon monoxide alarms must be installed in the service rooms and near all sleeping areas in all residential buildings, from your average family home to small apartment buildings with up to six living units. The rules also include annual testing, battery replacement and other requirements to ensure that carbon monoxide alarms in these residences are in good working order. Large buildings, such as condos, hotels and high-rise apartments, will have until this October to come into compliance with the new rules.

Installing a carbon monoxide alarm is perhaps one of the simplest and most effective ways to alert you and your family to the presence of this lethal gas, which would help them escape in the event of a leak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister, for your action on this important issue. I'm certain that making CO alarms mandatory for homeowners and landlords will help save lives within my community and across Ontario.

CO alarms are a very important tool for alerting our families in an emergency, but often a working CO or smoke alarm is not enough on its own to protect our loved ones from danger. In the event of an emergency, when CO or smoke alarms sound, we must all know what to do and where to go. After all, we wouldn't want to leave the safety of our loved ones to chance.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Can the minister please share some information on how we should properly prepare for a carbon monoxide or fire emergency in our homes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It is truly important that we install carbon monoxide alarms in our homes and test the batteries regularly, but the member is absolutely right: We need to do more in order to make sure that our homes and our families are safe.

In order to protect our loved ones during an emergency, we must go further than installing and testing carbon monoxide and smoke alarms. Every one of us should take a few minutes with our households to make an emergency escape plan. Draw a floor plan; include all possible emergency exits. Show two ways out of every room, if possible, and decide who will require assistance. As the acting district chief for Toronto Fire Services said recently, set up a safe meeting spot outside the front of your home, where you can then call the fire department.

The best way to ensure the safety of yourself and your family in an emergency is to have a practised plan of action in place, because emergency safety is everybody's responsibility. I encourage everybody to go to the website emergencymanagementontario.ca for more information and draft those emergency plans.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. On February 26, the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board asked the Ontario Civilian Police Commission for direc-

tion after several requests for the removal of Gerry Lougheed Jr. The requests not only came from the opposition, but also from members of the public.

Despite the request from the Sudbury board, the OCPC cancelled its March meeting. The OCPC was scheduled to meet yesterday. They cancelled that meeting.

Let me remind everyone that under subsection 25(1) of the Police Services Act, your minister can request the OCPC to investigate, inquire into and report on the conduct of a member of the board. Premier, will you agree with me that it's time for the OCPC to stop cancelling meetings and start doing their work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite knows very well that there is a defined process by which a police services board can refer a matter to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, the OCPC. There is a code of conduct also outlined by way of regulation through the police services board that outlines the obligations of a member of the police services board.

1140

Speaker, as we understand it, the matter has been referred by the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission.

I want to remind the member opposite and all members that the OCPC is not an arm of the government. It's independent of government. It's like a court. We, the government, do not dictate to the OCPC to take any particular action. It would be wrong. It would be breaking the law. We'll let the OCPC do their independent work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Listen, the Sudbury bribery scandal is a very serious issue. The Chief Electoral Officer tabled a historic report that highlighted apparent contraventions of the Election Act.

Despite a request from the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board, the OCPC has cancelled two meetings in a row. When we asked them why the meetings were cancelled, they referred us to their lawyer. Something's not right, Speaker. This doesn't pass the smell test.

Premier, has anyone from your office or your minister's office spoken to or met with the OCPC in any way in regard to the Sudbury bribery scandal and the request from the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear that the OCPC is an independent body. In fact, it falls under the Ministry of the Attorney General so that we can maintain the arm's-length nature of the OCPC.

To make allegations of the kind the member opposite is making is not fitting because—and we've been saying this from the very first day—we respect the independent work of the investigative bodies in this matter. We should let that process continue. We will not interfere in that process at any time whatsoever.

I want to be absolutely clear, Speaker, that the OCPC is independent from the government. We should let the OCPC do its work. We do not direct the OCPC. We do not tell them when to schedule a meeting and when not to

schedule a meeting, and we want to respect that independent adjudicative process.

TRANSPORT PAR AUTOBUS

BUS TRANSPORTATION

M. Gilles Bisson: Ma question est pour le ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines. Comme vous le savez, la ville de Hearst est connectée à Thunder Bay faisant affaire avec un système d'autobus. Ce système d'autobus privé a annulé ses services.

Je t'ai demandé hier, comme je te demande aujourd'hui dans la Chambre : est-ce que le ministre est préparé à intervenir avec l'ONTC pour être capable de trouver une solution et remettre en place des services d'autobus entre la ville de Hearst et Thunder Bay, pour que le monde n'ait pas besoin d'aller 17 heures alentour par Sudbury pour arriver à un rendez-vous médical à Thunder Bay?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I very much appreciate the question. We did have an opportunity to discuss it yesterday.

One of the things I do want to say is that I'm very proud of the fact that our government has made a commitment to keep four of the five lines of the ONTC in public hands. A little over a year ago, we made that decision and that announcement.

Earlier this week, we put a new board in place. The chair is Tom Laughren, the former mayor of Timmins, who is the chair of the ONTC. I know that these are the kinds of matters that they will want to be a part of discussing, as well.

I appreciate the challenge that's being faced with that operational decision, so it's one that I will be pursuing and following up on with the ONTC CAO and interim president as well as the board. I would encourage you to do the same.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to recognize Dr. Andrew Syriopoulos, a dentist from my riding, who's here with us today. Welcome.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to correct my record. I think I misspoke earlier. The cap-and-trade systems introduced by the Conservative government were on nitric oxide and sulphur oxide. I think I said sulphuric oxide.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to recognize Kim Hansen, a local dentist from my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a reminder for all members: Please wait until I recognize the questioner and the person giving the answer before you stand up and start answering. It's not helpful to the microphones—because they are instructed to wait until I recognize the person on either side.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will make a small reference to a constituent in Brant. Mr. John Gignac is here. John, welcome. I'm glad you're here, and I know you're here with other people. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CARBON MONOXIDE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to mark a momentous occasion. As of today, all houses in Ontario with an attached garage or a fuel-burning appliance are required to have a functioning carbon monoxide detector.

A year and a half ago, after five long years of trying, the Legislature passed my bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act. Six months ago, the government put the regulations in place, but gave homeowners until today to get their detectors.

Carbon monoxide is deadly, but it has no smell, taste or colour. The only way you will know if it's in your home is with a detector. So I would encourage everyone to take action today. Check your detector, or get one.

My private member's bill was named after Laurie, Richard, Cassandra and Jordan Hawkins, a Woodstock family who tragically perished due to carbon monoxide poisoning. We are remembering them again today.

There are many people who worked tirelessly to support the Hawkins Gignac Act, to ensure that no family suffers a tragedy like that again. Many of them are here today, and I want to recognize them and thank them all for their work.

I want to commend the insurance bureau for their generosity and their work to raise awareness.

I want to recognize, as you did, Mr. Speaker, John Gignac, Laurie's uncle and hero, for his tireless work to raise awareness of the need for carbon monoxide detectors. I ask all my colleagues to join me in applauding John Gignac and the entire Hawkins Gignac family.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. This might be one of the cases where the Speaker stood on someone else's introduction, which is the reverse of what

normally happens. My apologies. Anyway, welcome. We're glad you're here.

AWESOME FOUNDATION LONDON

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today to celebrate an awesome partnership between Oakridge Secondary School, in my riding of London West, and the Awesome Foundation London, a local chapter of the global movement that was inaugurated in London in January 2013.

Awesome London meets monthly to listen to pitches and award \$1,000 grants to people in the community with creative, and sometimes brilliant, ideas. The grants are funded and the pitch selected by Awesome London trustees, who each contribute \$100.

These no-strings-attached micro-grants have supported some incredible projects, from photography and documentary video to gardens for low-income mothers and a block party in a box.

Last month's winner was Ryan Hunt, of MakerBus, who plans to run a small electrical current through 1,200 Londoners holding hands, lighting a light bulb and entering the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's longest human circuit.

But not only is Awesome London funding all these awesome ideas; this year, they helped Oakridge Secondary School design students gain real-life experience as a creative design team. Last night, Awesome London unveiled a new logo, slogan and promotional poster that was conceived and created by Oakridge students in teacher Laura Briscoe's consumerism and design class, who worked both individually and in teams.

One of the original trustees said that Awesome London offers the kind of no-holds-barred optimism that connects people to each other and makes our community better.

Kudos to Awesome London for their optimism and confidence in the talented and awesome students of Oakridge Secondary School.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents in Cambridge.

This past Saturday, I attended the Cambridge Professional Fire Fighters' Association's annual retirement party. I was pleased to be able to thank the firefighters retiring from Local 499 for their dedication to the service.

Six members of the Cambridge Professional Fire Fighters' Association were honoured in light of their recent retirement: John Rehill, Walter MacNeil, Brad Grimwood, Maggie Walsworth, Bob Laurence, and Neil Main. Three of the six have retired from firefighting, while three have moved into management positions.

Many people came out on Saturday to the Armenian Community Center in Cambridge to celebrate these courageous firefighters who have served the public over

the course of their careers. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the retiring members of Local 499 for their service and to thank the men and women serving as firefighters in my riding of Cambridge for their bravery and for their unwavering dedication to keeping our communities safe.

The members of Local 499 have been actively involved in volunteering in Cambridge. Recently, they held a boot drive in support of muscular dystrophy. They packed hampers of supplies for families in need at Christmastime. I also had the opportunity to join some of the members of Local 499 at Zehrs during Easter, where they were packing groceries to raise donations for the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank.

These truly devoted firefighters match their years of service with their vast contributions to our community of Cambridge. Thank you.

HOCKEY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As members of this Legislature are aware, Chatham–Kent was a finalist in the 2015 Kraft Hockeyville competition, with results announced live on Hockey Night in Canada. I'm telling you, Speaker, boy, was the Chatham Memorial Arena ever rocking. It was a sea of jersey-wearing hockey fanatics.

Throughout the day there were numerous activities, such as a three-on-three hockey tournament, pony rides, a petting zoo and entertainment by local musicians.

Unfortunately, Chatham came up on the short end. It's unfortunate, but you know what? A proud hockey tradition is shaking hands after the game, win or lose, and I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations to the people of North Saanich, British Columbia, on their win.

While Chatham–Kent will not be hosting an NHL pre-season game, as a finalist in the competition they will in fact receive \$100,000 for much-needed arena upgrades. The community's spirit and the inspiring way in which everyone came together is worth more than any winning of a competition.

I had the privilege of addressing these wild hockey fanatics at the arena that night. I'm incredibly grateful to represent such a passionate riding. Congratulations to Chatham–Kent, Ontario's Hockeyville.

EVENTS IN INDIA

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today, Prime Minister Modi is in Canada meeting with Prime Minister Harper and Premier Wynne. While it is important to discuss opportunities to strengthen bilateral trade and to expand investments, our governments must also address concerns raised by Canadians regarding years of escalating attacks on religious minorities, including Christians, Muslims and Sikhs, as well as the extremely concerning incidents of violence against women in India.

Under Modi's government, the acts of state violence against Sikhs in 1984 have been referred to as a genocide, but this government must take the next steps to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. In

India, attacks on religious institutions continue to occur, as well as acts of fear and intimidation against Christians, Muslims and other minority religions. It is important for leaders to clearly state that all people have the right to practise their faith how they choose, and to do so free from persecution and fear.

It is particularly important to clearly denounce violence against women and to enact policies to address this pernicious epidemic. It is our obligation as a democratic state to protect the universal human rights of all people and to denounce the practice of targeting people based on heritage, beliefs or gender.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Granville Anderson: Today, I would like to acknowledge a grade 9 geography class at Clarington Central Secondary School that has taken their teacher's conservation program to a new level. The students have been actively encouraging their community to recycle electronic devices, especially cellphones, for their content, coltan, a substance that is mined at great expense to the environment as well as to the communities from which it comes.

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The greatest producer of coltan is the Democratic Republic of Congo, where mining communities are at the mercy of rogue militias. By recycling the substance, the students are passionate about helping to lessen the demand and alleviate the strain on these communities, as well as reinvesting their efforts in their school in other eco-friendly initiatives.

With so much concern today over sustainability and climate change, I am overjoyed to see young people in my riding taking a stand for their community, for the environment and for the well-being of those elsewhere in the world. Residents of Durham should recycle their unused cellphones at Clarington Central, as well as M.J. Hobbs, Dr. Ross Tilley and Enniskillen Public School.

I again commend the students of Clarington Central high school for their efforts.

PROJECT HOAP

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to stand in the Legislature today to congratulate an inspirational organization from my riding of Nipissing. Project HOAP, or Home Ownership Affordability Partnership, is a local non-profit organization that works to empower families by stabilizing living conditions. I trust that everyone in this Legislature recognizes the importance of affordable housing to our communities.

Project HOAP has been working in North Bay since 2003 to offer programs for low-income families with children, and programs that allow the greater community to respond to the present housing crisis. They have been so successful that Project HOAP has now completed their seventh and eighth renovation projects and are making preparations for their ninth.

I want to say congratulations to Project HOAP. Friends in North Bay, your work is not only inspiring, but it is truly making a difference in the lives of many families. I'm honoured to support this program and congratulate them on all that they have accomplished.

POLISH WAR VETERANS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise today to celebrate and honour the role of Polish troops in the World War II Allied victory in Europe on this day of my father's 90th birthday. Polish war veterans like my father fought alongside Great Britain and the allies from the very first day of the war until the very last. Her people showed extraordinary military bravery and 240,000 paid the ultimate price.

Many thousands of Poles were deported to Siberia, my father included, where they barely survived in the most dreadful conditions. His work ethic, resilience and sense of social justice were surely born out of that suffering.

Thankfully, my father escaped the Soviets, became a radar operator in the British navy, and spent the war aboard ship on campaigns in the Mediterranean and the English Channel.

At the end of the war, he met my late mother in Scotland and they emigrated to live in Kingston and the Islands, the veritable land of his youthful dreams. Many of those serving overseas never returned home.

Veterans had to wait until September 2009 for their heroic efforts to be officially recognized with the unveiling of the Polish War Memorial in London, England.

We should never forget those gallant men and women, like my father, who remained firm friends of the Commonwealth through thick and thin. I hope you have a wonderful birthday, Dad. Happy birthday.

AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's an honour, as usual, to stand in the House today to highlight a great event that took place in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora during constituency week.

On April 9, in honour of International Women's Week, Minister MacCharles and I had the privilege of recognizing 10 women and girls from across Newmarket–Aurora as part of Ontario's Leading Women, Leading Girls, Building Communities Recognition Program. The awards ceremony took place in the beautiful Aurora Cultural Centre in an evening filled with testimonials, congratulations, music and good cheer.

The program celebrates women and girls whose leadership improves the lives of other girls and women in our communities. The recipients are role models; they provide a positive example to women and girls, and men and boys, in their community.

Since 2006, Ontario has recognized more than 650 leading women and girls. This was an important event to recognize the political, economic and social achieve-

ments of outstanding women and girls both at home and around the world.

I want to congratulate the 10 award winners from Newmarket–Aurora: Ellen Campbell, Kristine Carbis, Nancy Coxford, Susan Lanthier-Doyle, Tammy Farbod, Leah Hans, Janice Hodgson, Emily Li, Jackie Playter and Nancee Webb. Thank you to each and every one of them for the positive impact they've made on our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (MONEY TRANSFERS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (TRANSFERTS DE FOND)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to money transfers / *Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui concerne les transferts de fonds.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The bill amends the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to limit the fees a money transferor may charge to a consumer, and to require that the money transferor disclose information regarding the fees to consumers. This would be an act of fairness and transparency, and allow a cap on those remittance fees to protect consumers.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community and Social Services is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98, the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business for tomorrow be changed such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 43 and Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item number 44.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister moves that notwithstanding standing order 98—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and almost \$700 more per household annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in taxes than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas this uncompetitive tax will not impact businesses outside of Ontario and will only serve to accelerate the demise of our once strong manufacturing sector; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I agree with this and will be passing it on to page Madison.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas by 2017, close to one third of Ontario's population will be made up of peoples of colour and First Peoples; and

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"Whereas racialized communities are overrepresented when it comes to issues of income inequality, un(der)employment and precarious employment; and

"Whereas the Ontario government used to have an Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat to address persistent racial inequalities and inequities in the province; and

"Whereas there currently does not exist a dedicated section or division that provides focus for government action on issues of concern to racialized people in this province; and

"Whereas the Colour of Poverty/Colour of Change Network, the Racism Free Ontario campaign by Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), and other like-minded groups are working to create broader public awareness so that Ontarians accept and acknowledge that racism (systemic, structural, institutional, interpersonal and individualized) is still alive in our province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, to also initiate a task force to address racism in Ontario and incorporate an anti-racism framework in the development of government policy, and to do so with comprehensive community engagement so as to develop practical and sustainable solutions to redressing all forms of systemic and interpersonal racism."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give it to page Colin.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition from the Parry Sound area. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas both provincial Highway 559 (from Nobel Road to Killbear Park) and Highway 124 (from Parry Sound to McKellar) are busy roads with fast-moving vehicles and no paved shoulders; and

"Whereas drivers, cyclists and pedestrians are put at safety risks on these stretches of highway between Carling, McDougall and McKellar which are the only routes available; and

"Whereas maintaining unpaved highway shoulders is costly; and

"Whereas area residents and visitors are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles, reduce health care costs and contribute to positive economic development;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To install paved shoulders on Highways 559 and 124 at the earliest possible opportunity, consistent with the 2013 Ontario cycling strategy that promotes safe, sustainable transportation."

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition and will give it to Megan.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic

events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

Speaker, I sign the petition and give it to page Abdullah to deliver.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

"Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I support this. I will sign my name to it and hand it to page Joshua.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: "Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services including hospital cleaning, and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including inpatient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care and the emergency department; and

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services;

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give this to page Colin.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Yakabuski: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

"Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

Speaker, I'm pleased to support this petition, affix my name to it and send it up with Ishika.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To do all in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

"To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

I sign this petition, Speaker, and give it to page Joshua.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing" a further "35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" as follows:

"To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to Madison.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: From the good people in the Goulais River area, Heyden and Searchmont.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, are being charged astronomical costs referred to as 'delivery fees';

"Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, would like the 'delivery fees' looked into and regulated so as to protect the consumer from big businesses gouging the consumer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop Algoma Power's influx of fees for delivery and stop the onset of increasing these fees another 40% within four years."

I agree with this petition, sign it and give it to page Colin to bring down to the Clerks' table.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental

effects, bird and bat kills, property losses, the tearing apart of families, friends and communities, and unprecedented costs;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms."

I totally agree with this petition, and I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Thomas.

1530

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Carina to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and almost \$700 more per household annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas this uncompetitive tax will not impact businesses outside of Ontario and will only serve to accelerate the demise of our once strong manufacturing sector; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I approve of this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Afayah.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, these are hundreds of signatures from people ranging from Thunder Bay to Manitouwadge and Marathon. The petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Joshua to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): When we last ended this, I believe the member from Huron-Bruce had the floor.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: To pick up where I left off, I would just like to revisit the purpose of Bill 66. The stated purpose of Bill 66 is to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River

basin and to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

When I last spoke, I had referenced some research from the legislative library, which is a great resource, and I made a comment whereby I recognized that, of 107—actually, I'll say it this way—all but four ridings in Ontario are within the basin. In actual fact, when I went back to check out my notes, it's all but two. So 105 ridings in Ontario are included in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. That begs the point that this Bill 66 is very, very important. I just wanted to go back and revisit that.

It goes without saying that the PC Party is supportive of improving and protecting the environment and our Great Lakes ecosystems, but Bill 66 has raised some serious questions with regard to the duplication of adequately addressed issues. So I ask the question, why are we then proposing a comprehensive piece of legislation that may very well create conflicts and confusion, burden municipalities and development with increased costs and red tape, and reduce local planning authority? Stewardship programs do not need another layer of bureaucracy; they need adequate funding, which Bill 66 does not appear to provide.

Unfortunately, the introduction of Bill 66 reminds me of the green energy and economy act. I have to ask if this government is again proposing far-reaching legislation simply to appease special interest groups and to create the illusion of protecting the environment. Ontario cannot afford another ill-advised policy that does nothing but download costs to municipal governments and complicate governance. The absence of funding, the passing reference to consideration of economic or social impacts, the appointment of the guardians' councils with the power to set fees and the potential for further erosion in the power of local planning authorities are all concerns that we have about Bill 66.

Another thing that I would like to share with everyone in the House today is that just this past fall, in December specifically, the governments of Canada and Ontario also signed a draft Canada-Ontario agreement, known as COA, on Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem health. The COA establishes a domestic action plan to guide co-operation and coordination of efforts to restore, protect and conserve Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem health over five years. The COA deals with the following issues: nutrients; harmful pollutants; discharges from vessels; areas of concern; lake-wide management; aquatic invasive species; habitat and species; groundwater quality; climate change impacts; science; promoting innovation; engaging communities; engaging First Nations; and engaging Métis.

Over and above that, the Conservation Authorities Act gives the government the power to regulate the development of shorelines for watershed management and the Planning Act provides municipalities with the authority to regulate shoreline development. Do you see a trend

and a theme here, Speaker? We already have adequate legislation in place, and so we can't help but question the relevancy of Bill 66.

I want to share with you as well that, over and above what I've just shared with you, there are additional acts that come into play. The government has already established the Toxics Reduction Act and the Environmental Protection Act to deal with harmful pollutants. As I said, you can see numerous pieces of legislation offer a framework for the protection of the Great Lakes ecosystem, and I question why Ontario simply does not fulfill its commitment under these existing agreements. There is no need for overlap and duplication of governance. Where is there a gap that necessitates Bill 66? What steps will the government take to prevent overlap and to ensure that all new regulations will be coordinated with Ontario's existing water legislation? There is a lot of room for concern, because where there are layers of legislation, there are gaps, there's wiggle room and opportunities for government to miss the mark.

Bill 66 could also potentially affect a number of other acts; for example, the Planning Act; the Condominium Act, 1998; the Greenbelt Act, 2005; the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act; and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. We have to really consider if Bill 66 is really necessary or, as I mentioned at the outset, if it's just a piece of legislation to appease special interest groups that this government sometimes panders to.

But let's take a look specifically at some of the things Bill 66 is proposing. One is the centralization of power at the provincial level. Bill 66 proposes to establish a Great Lakes Guardians' Council to provide a forum for Great Lakes ministers, provincial representatives, representatives of First Nations and Métis communities, and representatives from conservation authorities, environmental organizations, the scientific community, and industrial, agricultural, recreational and tourism sectors to identify priorities for actions, propose projects and discuss matters related to setting targets and the development of initiatives.

1540

While there is the appearance of widespread consultation, we know, if we take a look at the cap-and-trade consultations specifically called climate change consultations, they totally ignored everything that came out of those consultations. I worry. Again, while there's a widespread appearance of consultation, how much will they really take to heart of what is shared during those consultations? Again, this could very well turn out to be a very top-down process, because the minister, "as he or she considers advisable," may extend invitations to individuals from a variety of stakeholder groups to participate in council meetings. There is a lot of authority, through Bill 66, that will rest in the hands of the minister.

This legislation does not call for the presence of specific groups as mandatory at meetings, nor does it require balanced representation from the hundreds of communities situated in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence

River basin. This could limit the opportunity for public participation, and provides no assurance that goals and targets will reflect consultation with local officials and experts.

Under Bill 66, interested parties must consult with the minister and receive approval for an initiative at the proposal stage, thus again enabling the minister to influence the proposal from its inception. A public body then prepares a draft initiative and submits it to the minister. A proposal is to include a description of the costs and benefits as well as a strategy to finance the project. Again, this is a worry. It is the minister who is ultimately the one who decides on the initiatives, and after consulting with other Great Lakes ministers, he or she may set targets relating to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and loss of wetlands. Speaker, I say this because initiatives must be geographically focused as well.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change can direct a public body to develop and approve a proposal for those GFIs, and they may also set out the actions required to achieve those targets. All the while, people—experts—and citizens living within that GFI may not have an opportunity for input or influence. The minister has the option of accepting a proposal, directing a public body to make amendments to a proposal or declining approval of the project. After the consultation with other Great Lakes ministers, the minister can also amend an approved proposal. This kind of centralized power opens the door to regulation via ministerial directive, which this government has used too frequently to direct energy policy. So it's a huge flag at this time.

While the minister, through this bill, is to prepare a report at least once every three years to outline the status of initiatives, what happens if the established targets are not met? Again, accountability is lacking, which is becoming the norm from this government.

While municipalities will be able to submit a proposal for an initiative, another public body may make a submission and circumvent that municipality, allowing special interest groups to supersede elected officials—another flag.

I would like to see more specifics on who will comprise the guardians' council, but as we've come to know through the cap-and-trade initiative and the neonic issue, this government is heavy on directive and light on the details—yet another flag.

Going back to the guardians' council, given that an invitation by the minister is required, this does not sound like an open forum for participation. There is no guarantee that all relevant stakeholders will be consulted, and the council may very well cause more cost and delay instead of ensuring remedial action on areas of concern.

This guardians' council will determine priority areas, yet there appears to be little guarantee that it must consider economic impacts, local property rights, and local land use and development. Nor does Bill 66 explain how much this new level of bureaucracy will cost and how it will be funded. Speaker, there's another flag:

Who's going to pay for all of this? Is this going to be yet another downloaded burden on municipalities? Again, the devil is always in the details with this Liberal government.

I have a concern about which sources of water are affected by this legislation. The bill speaks to areas:

“(i) adjacent or close to the shoreline of a Great Lake, the St. Lawrence River or any other lake other than a Great Lake,

“(ii) within, adjacent or close to a permanent or intermittent tributary of a lake, or

“(iii) within, adjacent or close to wetlands.”

This description, again, raises questions about impacts on small water sources on private property, which could affect land use for homeowners, businesses and local communities.

Under section 26 of Bill 66, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is given the authority to:

—regulate or prohibit activities that may adversely affect the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin in applicable areas that are close to shorelines, tributaries or wetlands;

—require individuals to take action to protect the health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin;

—designate an enforcement body and enable the appointment of officers to issue orders and to enforce regulations and charge fees;

—govern the amount of fees and the payment of those fees.

Another provision allows access to a property without the consent of the owner or occupier, without a warrant, and a person is guilty of obstruction if he or she prevents or obstructs an authorized person from entering property or carrying out authorized actions or refuses to comply with a request.

Speaker, that is a huge flag, as my friend from Carleton-Mississippi Mills would surely attest to. You cannot—you cannot—go onto property without someone's consent.

I want to repeat that point, just to make sure everybody heard it: According to Bill 66, another provision allows—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We've got about four conversations going on. If you want to have a group meeting, take it outside, please.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I just want to go back and revisit that point. Another provision within Bill 66 allows access to a property without the consent of the owner or occupier, without a warrant, and a person is guilty of obstruction if he or she prevents or obstructs an authorized person from entering property or carrying out authorized actions or refuses to comply with a request—yet another flag, Speaker—and for this, fines range from \$25,000 to \$50,000 a day for an individual, and \$50,000 to \$100,000 a day for a corporation.

One clause stood out specifically in my mind: “If a corporation commits an offence ... a director, officer, employee or agent of the corporation who directed, authorized, assented to ... or failed to take all reasonable care to prevent the ... offence, or who participated in the commission of the offence, is also guilty of the offence, whether or not the corporation has been prosecuted for the offence.”

As municipalities are corporations, does this not expose elected officials and staff to a legal hazard and financial hardship if they have to defend against penalties? Yet another flag.

There are also restrictions on legal recovery of losses or costs. Speaking to my constituents in Huron-Bruce, I have received no requests for increased fees or penalties and restrictions on the use of the Great Lakes. Given the cuts to infrastructure funding that we've experienced across the province, the last thing municipalities want is more downloading of costs and requirements to amend official plans to conform to this legislation.

Provisions to Bill 66 would make lakeshore development fairly time-consuming and onerous, and add one more layer of costs and red tape for home builders and developers.

Now, let's talk about funding; specifically, the absence of funding to implement GFIs. Given the scope of Bill 66, it is rather concerning that there is no cost benefit or funding allocated. But again, Speaker, there is another common thread creeping through: When was the last time we saw this Liberal government do any cost analysis with regard to the Green Energy Act, cap and trade—the list could go on and on. But that's a discussion for another day.

Ministry staff confirmed—and this is very unfortunate; I recall this meeting very clearly—that there would be no money for this initiative in the 2015 budget. The costs associated with the guardians' council and enforcement could be quite substantial, and if there is no money in the budget for implementation, the costs of identifying and complying with targets may well cost local governments, farmers and businesses millions of dollars.

1550

New shoreline regulations, fees and penalties could end up creating a new revenue source for a cash-strapped government. Again, is there a theme happening here? Submitting Bill 66 without a cost estimation or allotted funding is a very, very big red flag. After almost 12 years of reckless management, honestly, this Liberal government cannot be trusted with an open-ended spending initiative. The funding of geographically focused initiatives—GFIs—and the guardians' council remains unclear. How much will it cost and, again, where will these funds come from? I might add, we question where these funds are going to come from.

What we saw last fall in public accounts, and in speaking to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—we learned that MOECC could be facing a potential cut of \$91 million in the upcoming budget. There's a lot of concern around this.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: In public accounts; that's right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Really?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes.

Another aim of Bill 66 is to ensure the establishment and maintenance of monitoring and reporting programs to improve understanding and management of the Great Lakes. With a view to saving the overall burdened taxpayers of Ontario some money in monitoring costs, I would like to bring Environment Canada's Great Lakes Surveillance Program to the minister's attention. This program is led by scientists at Ontario's office of water quality monitoring and surveillance. It has monitored water quality in the Great Lakes for over 40 years. Why do we need another redundant layer? Again, this program has been in existence for 40 years already.

This program provides some of the most comprehensive, systematic and detailed information that is available in the world for large lakes. There are just under 300 sites monitored on the Great Lakes and all of the surveillance program data is stored at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters in Burlington, Ontario, and can be retrieved upon request. Why duplicate something, especially when the province is broke?

The monitoring parameters that Ontario's office of water quality monitoring and surveillance performs include temperature, clarity, pH levels, nutrients, major ions, some biological parameters, metals and organic contaminants. Surveillance may also be done for selected compounds of emerging concern. The majority of the laboratory analyses are conducted by Environment Canada's National Laboratory for Environmental Testing.

My office, in preparing, researching and understanding the impacts of Bill 66, contacted Environment Canada's water quality monitoring division and was assured that their freshwater quality monitoring program continues to perform a range of ongoing monitoring activities tailored specifically for the Great Lakes basin, and that the Great Lakes-focused reports and publications on the results of monitoring are being produced by both Environment Canada's water quality scientists and experts in co-operation with provincial, federal and international partners.

This water quality monitoring information supports decision-making under the Canada-US Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Canadian federal Great Lakes Program, the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, and lake-wide management plans.

Environment Canada's water quality science also supports action to restore and protect the Great Lakes under the Great Lakes nutrient initiative and the Great Lakes area of concern.

With top-notch data like this that is available with a phone call or a press of a button, I have to question why this Liberal government would need to create a new layer of bureaucracy to measure and monitor the Great Lakes. Really, this would be unacceptable duplication and just

add more cost, which we're afraid will either be passed along to municipalities that have already had too much downloading on their shoulders or else burden taxpayers' shoulders even more.

When we talk about municipalities, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the erosion in the power of local planning authorities as well. Going back to statements at ROMA, the member from Simcoe-Grey—my interim leader, Jim Wilson—spoke about the importance of a healthy and effective working relationship between municipal and provincial levels of government. He spoke of the need for fairness, accountability, recognition of municipal priorities and respect for local decision-making power.

If we apply the Premier's rural lens to Bill 66's impact on municipalities, a number of concerns are evident. I'll talk about those concerns in a moment. But I have to tell you that according to news, and members of municipal government who participated in ROMA, they were quite excited that Premier Wynne referenced the need to have a rural lens throughout her speech at ROMA.

I have an article right here that actually is an interesting read. I'll share a couple of quick quotes: "Several hundred conference attendees took in the seminar, but it was when the term 'rural lens' was on the lips of Premier Kathleen Wynne three times during her conference address that Mayor Ginn said he knew the idea was finally getting across.

"Ginn said that awareness at the provincial level is certainly an important step in getting policy-makers to respect the specialized needs of rural Ontario, but action will have to follow."

Speaker, I raise the question today very sincerely, and it's not being smart; it's just standing up for overburdened municipalities across Ontario. I question if the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change applied the rural lens to Bill 66. You'll see through my comments—because I applied the rural lens to this bill, and I think you'll see that he has not. They're not walking their own talk, yet this is something we get time and time again from this Liberal government.

Again, if we apply the rural lens that the Premier referenced as an important tool to making sure policy fits in rural Ontario, there are a number of concerns evident with respect to Bill 66.

Municipalities have faced a number of significant cutbacks in financial transfers, and Bill 66 will download even more costs onto cash-strapped local governments. Despite all of the pushback from municipal councils across Ontario at the government removing municipal land use planning authority under the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, the Liberals have once more introduced a bill that will lead to a greater loss of municipal autonomy.

According to Bill 66, a geographically focused initiative, known as a GFI, prevails in the case of a conflict between a designated policy set out in the proposal and an official plan, zoning bylaw or policy statement issued under the Planning Act. This bill, Bill 66, will require

municipalities to incur costs and amend their official plans with the legislation, and notes that in cases where there are conflicts with other legislation or regulation, “the provision that provides the greatest protection to the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin prevails.”

If an official plan is not amended to conform with designated policies, the minister, together with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, can issue a joint, non-appealable order to amend the official plan. Does that sound like municipal autonomy to you? I don’t think so.

Also, Bill 66 prevents a municipality from performing any public works improvements in an area that is part of a proposal under Bill 66, which could very well conflict with geographically focused initiatives.

It just doesn’t make any sense whatsoever, Speaker. Generations of Ontarians have grown up spending vacation time along the shores of our Great Lakes. I imagine that many people here today have fond memories of going to the cottage and swimming and playing on the beach.

But we need to talk about another threat with specific respect to the loss of municipal autonomy. We have a lot of tourism in Huron–Bruce, as does every lake’s shoreline in Ontario. I can’t be emphatic enough when I say, if we’re going to employ Great Lakes protection, we have to all agree right here, right now in this House that we cannot put industrial wind turbines in our lakes. I think the member from Scarborough, the Minister of Economic Development, can certainly attest that he wouldn’t want turbines in his lake, as we saw happen in 2011.

Going back to municipalities, I’d like to share with you that municipal governments depend on development fees and property taxes for funding, yet Bill 66 could result in development restrictions, delays and confusion in conflicting regulations. We have no reassurance from this Liberal government that Bill 66 would not download costs, as I said, to already overburdened municipalities, especially as this bill does not provide an estimate of the costs for local government, farmers and businesses to comply with any new regulations; nor do we know if this bill actually takes into consideration their ability to pay.

1600

Just to wrap up—I have just over five minutes here—I’d like to share some concluding comments. Again, care for the environment, care for the Great Lakes can never, ever be painted by just one political colour. We all need to do our best to protect what’s a most precious natural resource that we’re so fortunate to have in our province.

While the PC Party is committed to a healthy and prosperous Great Lakes region, I question if it would not be a more expedient and effective approach to work with our federal and American partners to coordinate efforts to protect and remediate issues facing the Great Lakes. In reviewing Ontario’s agreement with the federal government and other available legislative tools, is there a need to create a separate provincial framework? Bill 66 is positioned to create an extra layer of bureaucracy, and I question: Do we need it?

In Bill 66, there is a concern that the province’s direction is drifting more towards creating bureaucracies and regulations and away from the fundamental and adequately funded front-line programs which produce tangible improvements. From a rural lens perspective, Ontario doesn’t need another layer of bureaucracy to tell local decision-makers how to run their communities. What the province needs is for the Liberal government to honour its current agreements and adequately fund and staff programs. I would dare say we do not need more delay, more review and more burdensome regulations.

Funding needs to flow to projects. We all know that adding another layer of bureaucracy could very well be a hurdle in that funding flowing smoothly. Measures to protect our natural heritage must balance environmental concerns with economic ones. We always should be thinking of our fiscal house first and then everything else falls into play from that.

The government must ensure that a sustainable infrastructure for tourism, fishing, industry, transportation and waste water systems is fully supported, and recognize the major role the Great Lakes play in the greater economy of the province. Bill 66 must also recognize the important steps the agricultural sector has taken to address environmental concerns and ensure that this bill does not negatively impact farming operations.

Aspects of Bill 66 which result in the centralization of decision-making to the upper tier of government make it possible to facilitate the downloading of costs to municipalities. The loss of local decision-making and the heavy-handed penalties for non-compliance absolutely needs to be reviewed as this type of legislative overreach does nothing to engender a respectful balance between provincial and municipal levels of government.

I just want to take a moment here with a little sidebar. In my riding of Huron–Bruce, we have a number of people that live along the shoreline. They’ve lived there their entire lives. They absolutely care. One person that I want to give a shout-out to is my constituent manager, Lynne DiCocco. Lynne actually is retiring on Friday. She’s retiring for a second time. Her first career was as a teacher. She was so frustrated with what was going on with the development of industrial wind turbines in the area of Huron–Bruce that she jumped readily and full-heartedly into supporting me in my campaign in 2011. I couldn’t help but recognize her sincere concern and her dedication to the riding. So I offered her an opportunity to work with me, and the three and a half years have just flown by. Before I close off, I just want to say to Lynne, thank you for everything. You lead with your heart. Your dedication to detail and your exact research and commitment to all of Huron–Bruce has made me a better MPP.

Speaker, in closing, I need to go back and say this: I have raised a number of very, very important questions associated with Bill 66. It’s my sincere hope—the minister is in the House today—that the PC Party can help improve this piece of legislation with amendments when this bill makes its way to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on some of the statements that have been made by the member from Huron—Bruce. I think she does bring a genuine passion to this issue. I do want to say, though, that the most salient point that she made, for me, was the lack of autonomy around municipalities. I have to say, this was a theme that we heard at ROMA this year. It's true that language can be very powerful. They were very pleased that the Premier said "rural Ontario" several times, but there is a genuine concern out of there on behalf of rural municipalities around the interference of centralized power and policy from Queen's Park in those municipalities.

It really does remind me of my time as a trustee at the school board, where, over the years, we were mandated more and more and more to do the work of the province, with very few tools to do so. It's so interesting that as we bring forward these issues of firing teachers across the province, the Minister of Education comes back and blames us as trustees, especially in this caucus, for doing what we actually were legislated to do, which was to have the consultation and do the consolidation of those schools.

Of course, the Premier, when she was a trustee, didn't do that work. She ran a deficit, and a supervisor came into the Toronto Board of Education and she lost her seat at the table because the supervisor had to come in because they ran a deficit. It's a little hypocritical.

The member from Huron—Bruce I think draws the point that legislation needs to be truly consultative. When this does get to committee, as it should, we are going to be very vigilant around introducing amendments that actually make it stronger and that it's not just window dressing, because the environment is too important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It was interesting listening to the member for Kitchener—Waterloo, given the incredible transfer of authority and autonomy to municipalities when we took over from a government that eviscerated school boards, took away their taxing authority and rendered school trustees much more marginal than they ever had been.

Coming from the member from Huron—Bruce—criticizing us when they forced amalgamation, downloaded 40% of all rural highways onto the rural municipal tax bill, plus downloaded public health and social services at a time when, in every other province, those things were being uploaded.

This government now provides higher levels of municipal funding than any other government in its history.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No one believes that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Actually, we do. Some of us were mayors of cities in adjacent jurisdictions while this was going on.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's not true.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is true. And if you were ever active in municipal politics you would know that Ontario municipalities—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I listened to you. I really listened to you without interrupting you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think it's time to listen to me. I would like interaction through me.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister, if you want to get in a cross-debate, you lose time. Try to stick to the issue and talk through me. Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's very hard, Mr. Speaker, when you're being interrupted. You can barely hear yourself think.

We went through massive, unprecedented downloadings. We have actually given new financial tools to that.

It's also interesting, this description of bureaucracy. There is no bureaucracy. There's nothing enforced. As a matter of fact, it was mostly rural municipalities, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and others who designed a lot of the infrastructure that's going. It's all volunteers. It does not actually duplicate anything. This is a volunteer process that actually catalyzes and connects existing organizations. There is no overarching authority; it is entirely a volunteer network where the province takes responsibility. We're actually putting \$15 million a year into supporting municipalities, farm organizations and environmental groups to do that.

I'm sorry I can't address it, but sadly I lost about one-third of my time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess we shouldn't be interacting with each other.

The member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Maybe they shouldn't be heckling.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If you would like to come up and do my job, you're welcome.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I have great difficulty in seeing why this piece of legislation is needed. It talks about the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River basin, and we all know that the water quality in the Great Lakes, in the St. Lawrence River, in the Ottawa River and in all the lakes across southern Ontario has been improving for years. That's happening, I would say, without government help—sometimes in spite of government help, because people in Ontario are becoming more educated and willing to do what they can to fix the environment, to not pollute, to not detract from the health of our waters, our lands, our wetlands, endangered species and all of those things. People do that.

1610

This piece of legislation does nothing more than what we already do with other legislation, except it's going to create more bureaucracies, like the guardians' council, which will be appointed by somebody but not elected—so very undemocratic. To me, that is dangerous because

we are supposed to be a democratic place where people have their say with their ballot in an election year, and that's not going to happen. We're going to legislate democracy away. We've tried that before, and that was not a good idea.

It's going to give more power to groups potentially that do not have the best interests certainly of private property landowners. Let me speak to that question, the private property landowners. It gives access to property without a warrant, which is a terrible thing. We see that in too much legislation and that practice has to end.

Mr. Speaker, I see I'm out of time. It's a piece of legislation we don't need and we shouldn't have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to commend the member from Huron–Bruce on her one-hour lead on this Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act, because I could hear in her voice and in her statements the passion she wants to bring from her riding and comment on this bill. I enjoyed your debate.

This bill is the latest bill that's been presented. It has more action and result than the one that was previously presented.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's true.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, it is true. There is a little more teeth in this particular bill, but we know it's not the full picture of how it's supposed to look when it comes to lake protection in Ontario. I think everyone here knows that water is a resource we cannot afford to allow to go down a road where there isn't protection. So things that we can do that are going to help proactively look after our waters, lakes, oceans and even ponds in local communities—wetlands are very important.

This is a bill that needs to be debated. It certainly is something that we'd like to see when we get to committee. As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo mentioned, it looks like there's a lot of work to be done on this bill in order to make sure that it is going to be effective.

There are Earth Days and cleanup days, and I've participated in many of those. I've gone to the Thames River that runs through the city of London, and you wouldn't imagine the things you pull out of that river. You've got bikes and tires, appliances and clothing—anything you can imagine.

So we do have to take better care of our waters and our lakes and oceans. This is certainly a bill that we need to have a discussion about and go forward on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly appreciate the comments from the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, London–Fanshawe and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Clearly, the fact of the matter is, we all care about the Great Lakes. The manner in which we facilitate that care is what has come into question, and we really do have to work together. As has been suggested by my colleagues to my left, we really do have to try and get together and

not be railroaded in committee to make sure we are comfortable with what's coming forward.

I want to close by sharing a couple of things. First of all, again, I really want to thank Lynne—all the best on your second retirement. Enjoy the lakeshore, as you so deservedly have the opportunity to do now.

But to close, I just want to again go back to the article in a local paper, the Citizen, Thursday, March 26, where the mayor from Central Huron was reflecting on the reference and the seeming commitment to the rural lens that the Premier thought should be laid on every piece of policy that comes through. He said:

"I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard someone complain about a policy made in Toronto...." The article goes on to say, "The driving force behind the development of the rural lens, Ginn said, was the provincial policy statement and its ongoing ignorance of the needs of rural communities."

Just for everybody today listening and watching, I would invite you all to go and check out this rural lens and apply it to policies affecting your own local municipality. For the full ROMA rural lens, the report can be found on the ROMA website at www.roma.on.ca.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, today we're debating Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. I want to say I appreciate the fact that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is here. He pays attention to his legislation, and he's in the House when we debate it. Even when we disagree, I appreciate the fact that he listens to those disagreements.

I want to start with a few observations: first, that the Ontario NDP believes that access to water is a basic human right—life is impossible without it—and that the Great Lakes is a shared public good. They are a common heritage to all of us in this part of the world.

The Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River basin is hugely important to Ontario's ecology, its tourism and its economy. The Great Lakes define us. They deal with our thirst. They provide us with transport. They provide us with power. They're an extraordinary resource that has shaped the way we have lived in this part of North America. We all need lakes and rivers that are drinkable, that are swimmable and that are fishable. I note that in the preamble to the bill those goals are set out as well. I'm appreciative of that approach.

As you are well aware, Speaker—because you represent Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you're close to the water—comprehensive government action is long overdue in dealing with the problems that we face with the Great Lakes. They're currently threatened by invasive species and the destruction of shoreline habitats. They're threatened by algae blooms and by low water levels linked to global warming. They're threatened by pollution from sources like sewer overflows, microbeads, pesticide runoff and untreated waste water.

There's no doubt that an ecosystem approach to dealing with the problems of the Great Lakes is what's

needed to bring everyone together to solve a problem in a particular area. Breaking us and our actions down into silos is not going to address the substantial, profound problems and challenges that we face with the Great Lakes.

At the end of the day, we need clear accountability. We need to know that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change will be accountable for fulfilling the goals of this act so there's no confusion over who is to be called on when a problem presents itself—no confusion for the minister involved and no confusion for the government involved; there is a point person who will be dealing with what's before us.

My, Speaker, you've become so much more handsome in the last few minutes, and I don't know what it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Wayne Gates): I appreciate that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We welcome the introduction of the Great Lakes act, but I want to say to the minister and I want to say to the chamber as a whole that without follow-through, without investment and without enforcement, this bill will just be a plan to create a plan. We have to ensure that the bill is not merely symbolic but that it sets strong targets and timelines, ensures clear accountability, is adequately funded and leads to effective enforcement and measurable progress.

The Great Lakes need protection, but the government must not use this act as a means to avoid accountability and to download costly provincial responsibilities onto other public bodies, notably municipalities.

I want to give credit to those citizen activists, those environmental activists, those people who have a great love for the Great Lakes who have worked diligently through the years advancing this agenda.

This is the third iteration of this bill, Speaker. The people who have pushed for the cleanup of the lakes and for action on the lakes never stopped, never were discouraged and never gave up because they understood what was at stake.

1620

The threat to the lakes is substantial, and a strong response is way overdue. I measure the response not by the number of reports that have been published, not by the number of laws that have been passed, but by the realities that people who live on the Great Lakes have to respond to, year to year.

I'll give you an example. Last year, toxic algae blooms shut down the water system in Toledo, Ohio—shut it down. On Saturday, August 2, the people of Toledo, Ohio, were told that they couldn't drink the water, that they couldn't wash with it and that they should stay away from it. Local news outlets told people, "Don't use the ice cubes from your refrigerator's ice-cube-making system because they could be contaminated."

Let me quote the headline from one of the local news organizations: "Algae Infects Lake Erie, Forces State of Emergency Due to Toxic Water."

"Water was deemed unsafe to use for all purposes for nearly 400,000 people"—400,000 people. My colleague

here from Hamilton Mountain—a city about the size of that, 400,000, 450,000.

Imagine you, Speaker, representing an area, and finding out when you wake up on a Saturday morning that no one in your riding can use the water, that they have to depend on bottled water or whatever they've saved in any other context. It is a crisis. It is an emergency. And it isn't something distant or far off; it has, in fact, happened—a major city forced to shut down its water system because of the deterioration of, the contamination of, one of the Great Lakes. The water couldn't be boiled to make it drinkable. That concentrated the toxin. The governor of Ohio declared an emergency for Toledo and the surrounding countryside. They had to go into action quickly, bringing bottled water, water containers, into the city so people could at least drink. They couldn't wash, they couldn't do their dishes, they couldn't do their laundry, but at least they had water to drink.

Detroit and Cleveland had to test their water. Think about it, Speaker: Detroit, Cleveland, Windsor—major cities in a situation where public officials couldn't be certain that the water would be safe—had to test on a regular basis to ensure that their responsibility to the people of their city was carried out. No water; no city. And this problem is not going away.

That shutdown of the municipal water system in Toledo caught the attention of people across North America. National Geographic wrote an extensive article, parts of which I'm going to quote, about this problem, because it bears directly on what we're dealing with today. The headline was, "Driven by Climate Change, Algae Blooms Behind Ohio Water Scare Are New Normal: Climate Change and Increased Runoff Are Triggering More Potentially Toxic Blooms."

You, Speaker, know about this issue. I had an opportunity a few days ago to talk to you about this, and you said, "If you're going to talk about the Great Lakes, for God's sake, talk about Lake Erie and talk about the problem with the algae blooms."

We all here have to recognize the fact that as the world gets hotter, lakes like Lake Erie, which are very shallow, are going to become more and more hospitable to these algae blooms. As we see more and more invasive species like zebra mussels, which take out of the water the relatively benign algae, they leave ecological space for these toxic algae. So we've got climate change making the lakes hotter, we've got invasive species disrupting the ecosystem, and we have a problem with pollution—fertilizer, leaks from septic tanks—leaking into that lake and making it impossible for people to even use the water for washing.

Speaker, the kind of algae that were blooming in Lake Erie need warm temperatures and the nutrients phosphorus and nitrogen to grow. We combine all those things and we get water that we can't drink, that we shouldn't even be near.

I want to note that strong winds—as you're well aware, as the world gets hotter, we'll get more intense

storm activity—can drive blooms at the water's surface down into the depths of the lake, where water intake pipes can draw contaminated water into systems serving municipalities.

Speaker, it's not just a problem on the surface; it's not just a problem of something looking ugly—and it is. It's a problem threatening the water systems of millions of people in the central part of North America.

One of the people with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States, who was interviewed by National Geographic, noted that it didn't take very long for aquatic systems like Lake Erie to get thrown off balance, but it takes patience and long-term management to get them back to a healthy state.

Mr. Davis said that the biggest thing people need to be aware of is that there is no short-term solution. Our lakes and coastal systems are out of balance. Anyone who represents an area whose drinking water system is threatened knows precisely how profound the problem is.

Speaker, I took your advice about the problem in Fort Erie, and I Googled a bit and came across a website—the Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada real estate blog—talking about toxic algae in Lake Erie. I have to say to all of you here that for a site that's put up by a real estate firm, it was a very well written, very well researched article on the problem that was faced and the history—and very graphic in its description.

What is toxic blue-green algae and why is it a problem? Here's what they had to say:

"It reeks of rotting fish or an open sewer; strong and nauseating. It can contain *E. coli* bacteria, which is harmful when ingested by humans or pets. It can also contain cyanotoxin, which can cause skin irritation, respiratory difficulty and gastrointestinal distress.

"Toxic algae appears every summer. The more frequent and heavy the rain downpours, the worse it becomes." As you're well aware, Speaker, we're going to see more frequent extreme downpours in the years to come. "Algae feed on phosphorus. New farming techniques, climate change, and changes in Lake Erie's ecosystem make pollution a stubborn problem."

Now, in the 1960s, Lake Erie water quality was usually problematic. Lake Erie was written off as a dead lake, and it took billions of dollars of investment, tight regulation and action at all levels of government on both sides of the border to actually bring that lake back. And for a while we had success. But the algae blooms have returned. As it gets hotter, the conditions that cause the algae to bloom are friendlier to them than they are to us.

In the summer of 2011, "Lake Erie faced the largest algae bloom in recorded history, with one sixth of its waters covered, and tainting drinking water for 2.8 million people. Toxic blue-green algae spread in some areas as far as one could see, and up onto the shore. Hundreds of thousands of dead fish washed onto shores."

Speaker, I grew up in Hamilton. I remember going out to Burlington and just walking along the beach strip and seeing thousands of fish—even then, as a kid—washed up on the shore. The stink was incredible. I know what people were facing when they dealt with this in 2011.

The Great Lakes face multiple threats. Pollution, global warming and invasive species are three of the biggest. A bill—a law—is not enough to protect the Great Lakes, even in the face of imminent threat. I've debated many a water bill in this Legislature. Believe me, Speaker, I have; I have seen them come and go since 2006. Many have passed, and yet we continue to face severe problems with the health of the Great Lakes.

1630

I have to ask: Will the government have the strength and the will to take on the problems? This minister has a long history with environmental issues. I don't have a question about his interest in them. Will his government let him do what needs to be done? Will it give him the budget that he needs to do the task? Will the Premier let him do what he has to do?

We can pass a thousand bills like this. We can pass bills like this every day, but if there's no effective climate plan, if there's no effective enforcement of laws to protect the environment, then the laws will just jam up server space at some IT facility somewhere here in Ontario and will have no other effect, and our lakes will deteriorate.

Let me tell you why I'm worried that even a good bill is not enough, because without enforcement, the problems that we see will just continue to visit themselves upon us.

Timmins Press reported on March 17 about the interim report on the Gogama area train derailment, the one that occurred March 7. The Transportation Safety Board said that it might have been the result of very heavy oil trains passing over those tracks. The Transportation Safety Board said, "Preliminary indications are that track infrastructure failures may have played a role in each of the Gogama accidents."

Over a period of three weeks there were three major train derailments. Luckily, in one case, the train was empty; it was empty cars being shuttled back to be re-filled. But we're not always lucky. In one of those incidents we had a major fire.

"In two incidents, one on February 14, the other on March 7, CN freight trains hauling between 94 and 100 tank cars loaded with crude oil had derailments while travelling along the CN mainline, which is part of what CN calls the Ruel Subdivision."

There were permanent slow orders on much of this rail line, and the transportation board very discreetly in their report said, "There were permanent slow orders on much of the subdivision"—that's the rail line—"to protect against various infrastructure and track maintenance issues."

"At the time of the March 7 derailment, the eastbound freight was moving at 43 miles per hour," said the Transportation Safety Board. "The two locomotives had crossed the Makami River steel bridge. The train began braking on its own and the crew looked back to see that a fireball erupted among the oil tank cars about 700 feet away."

"One of the cars broke free of the train and rolled down the riverbank, breaking through the ice and into the

Makami River. Other cars rolled off the tracks as well, 38 altogether. 'A number of the cars were breached, released product'"—that's dumped this huge volume of diluted bitumen, tar sands oil—"and ignited a large pool fire which destroyed the steel rail bridge. Most of the remaining cars sustained fire damage ranging from minor to severe. About 700 feet of track was destroyed,' said the Transportation Safety Board...."

They're still examining. They're looking at the rail components from the derailment site; they're sampling and testing product from the cars.

I want to tell you, Speaker, that France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt, was in her home on the morning of March 7 when she noticed all these messages come piling in on her BlackBerry. At 8 a.m. she phones back and talks to people in Gogama, who say, "We've had this massive derailment. We're in the town. We can see these huge flames. We can see this pillar of smoke." So she drove out. It's about two and a half hours. She could see the flames, 10 metres shooting into the air, and 300 metres above that, this plume of smoke—heavy, thick, oily smoke—carrying soot and unburned oil all over that region. That fire burned for three days; 32 tanker cars were involved.

Madame Gélinas came to the area, to Gogama, around 11; at about 1 p.m. it started to snow. You know those big, fluffy, wet flakes that come down? You know the ones that we've all seen sort of towards the end of winter or the beginning of winter? They're not really hard and sharp. These had come down from the clouds above and they drifted down through that plume of smoke. So what they were getting in Gogama was grey snow, not white snow—big fluffy, flakes of snow that had picked up oil and soot as they drifted down. That spread all over the lake, all over the river and all over the adjoining houses. Speaker, as you well know, it would have settled down onto the branches of trees, onto the needles of pine trees, on pine cones. It would have spread itself on the rocks. You had this layer of grey snow all around. For three days that fire burned, dumping oil in the water, in the river and the lakes.

It's my understanding from Madame Gélinas that there has been a significant effort to try and clean up. The cleanup crews understand that diluted bitumen doesn't float for very long. It falls to the bottom of the lakes, so they put nets all along the bottom of the lake, all along the bottom of the river. But I want to say to you, Speaker—and I've snorkeled some northern lakes. They're not like a plastic basin. They're lumpy. They have rocks sticking up here and there. I'm sure there are people who have, with their own boats, discovered rocks in those lakes from time to time. If they're successful in getting 50% of the oil that was spilled, that will be impressive. If they're able to get 60% of the oil, that will be impressive; 70% of the oil will be impressive. But they won't get 100% of that oil. All the oil and soot that has coated the pine needles and the branches of the trees throughout that region is going to be part of that environment as all that snow melts. And it is melting. It is melting now.

Madame Gélinas and I together wrote a letter to the minister on March 10 asking him to take action to clean up the spill. By all accounts, in fact, action has been taken, and he wrote back to that effect. But we also asked—and I repeat it in this chamber today—that there needs to be an investigation. If, in fact, CN Rail is responsible for this spill, if they were, through an act of commission or omission, responsible for contaminating this large part of Nickel Belt, this part of a watershed that runs into Lake Huron, it isn't just a question of remediation, it's also a question of laying charges and seeking damages. If you rob a bank, and the money is recovered, you still robbed a bank. If you contaminate a large area, if you contaminate a lake or river, and they're able to get all that oil—which, frankly, I can't see physically happening—you still caused a threat to the environment.

When we wrote to the minister, we said, "Where environmental laws have been broken, CN and the owners of the oil"—I think that was Valero petroleum—"should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. You should also ensure that containment and cleanup are undertaken by CN and that this is overseen by your ministry."

I want to thank the staff at the Ministry of the Environment. I want to thank the first responders. I want to thank all of those who have been part of that cleanup. Again, there are profound physical limits to the amount that they can actually clean up. But I also say, if we're going to have real protection of water, then those who create this kind of contamination have to be charged. It has to be factored into their business plan. They have to know that if they just come close to incinerating a village in the middle of the night, but they fail to do that and just simply contaminate the environment for many square kilometres, that is of serious consequence to them as corporate executives and as corporations. The minister has substantial power to order remediation and cleanup and he has substantial power to prosecute this corporation.

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I would also suggest, and Madame Gélinas suggested, that it would be good for the Ministry of the Environment to take leadership and meet with the people from that region and help them prepare their claims, because right now they're at a bit of a loss. They don't know how to calculate a claim in this case. They don't know, when the ice melts, if their waterlines running into the lake will bring in water or oil. They don't know, as the ice and the snow melt and the water goes into the soil, whether their wells will be contaminated or not. The day after the derailment they probably weren't contaminated, but the snow has melted now. The grey snow has melted, and the soot and the oil are spread everywhere.

For us, for this Legislature, we know that there are substantial powers in the Environmental Protection Act to prosecute. There are substantial penalties. I would say that an investigation should be done. The results of the investigation should be made public. If the corporations involved are responsible, then there should be charges laid and fines levied and whatever other penalties are available.

This is a long story. I raise this story because, if we're actually going to protect the Great Lakes, we have to know that there will be substantial enforcement against those who damage the Great Lakes. If there is not substantial enforcement against them, then we have an interesting debate here today and we'll have other interesting debates in committee and we'll probably have an interesting debate at third reading. But in the end, will you be able to drink the water in Fort Erie? I don't know. Will you be able to drink the water in Gogama? I don't know.

I am hopeful that investigation will take place. I'm hopeful that charges will be laid if the evidence is there. I have to ask you, Speaker: If you can crash a train, flood a river with oil and almost incinerate a village and not be charged, what do you have to do in this province to get in trouble with the law? Because, I would say, this pretty much sets you in a position.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I gather there are many comments by other members.

I've talked about my concerns with lack of enforcement in northern Ontario—or, sorry, so far, an apparent lack of enforcement. That remains to be seen. I look forward to seeing what comes out.

I want to talk about a threat to a source of water that's closer to this Legislative Building, and that's the threat to the Great Lakes and the need for action arising from Line 9. I wrote to the minister in February laying out my concerns with a pipeline that crosses major waterways all along the north shore of Lake Ontario.

The provincial government has spoken out. I remember when Mr. Bradley, as Minister of the Environment, raised his objections to the National Energy Board. We pressed him to go further. He said, "It was outside our legal jurisdiction." I actually sought other legal advice, and the best I could get was, "It's unclear." I'd say that where it's unclear and where you have a national government, a Harper government for whom the environment is not even a factor of consideration—in fact, it may well be a negative consideration—it's up to the province of Ontario to defend the people of Ontario. When we are abandoned by the federal government, what instruments, what tools, are at our hands to take these people on?

I wrote to the minister and said:

"As you know, Enbridge is in the process of applying for 'leave to open' approval for its Line 9B pipeline, which will carry diluted bitumen"—the same material that burned in Gogama—"across major river systems from North Westover to Montreal. A pipeline spill here would have a devastating effect on these river systems, whose watersheds supply drinking water for more than half of Ontarians."

Speaker, more than half of Ontarians are in the risk area for a substantial leak from that pipeline.

Enbridge's application comes after the National Energy Board inexplicably reversed its previous decision to suspend its approval of the project. If you remember, the suspension was due to Enbridge's failure to install

emergency shut-off valves on either side of all major water crossings as it is required to do. Based on pretty much the same information it possessed when it suspended the approval, the National Energy Board has now decided that Enbridge's preferred shut-off system is adequate after all.

Speaker, to leave the safety of our drinking water in the hands of the Harper government is irresponsible. I alerted the minister and the government to a recent report by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration in the United States. Its September 18, 2014, advisory warns that reversing the flow of a pipeline or changing the product can have a "significant impact" on the line's safety and integrity and may not be advisable in some cases. Both risk factors apply to the line 9B pipeline.

The American advisory recommends hydrostatic pressure tests in light of recent pipeline spills and other information that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration has become aware of, and yet the NEB's approval of the line 9B pipeline reversal did not require such a test to confirm pipeline integrity. I guess we will get to find out. Maybe it will blow; maybe it won't—hopefully not in Hamilton Harbour, hopefully not into the Humber River, hopefully not into the Ganaraska, hopefully not into the Moira. Take your pick. There are many great rivers flowing into Lake Ontario that are crossed by that pipeline.

It was reasonable for the province to request hydrostatic pressure testing. It was reasonable for the NEB to say, "You can't put this into effect until you put shut-off valves on either side of the river." But, Speaker, we're in a situation where our drinking water, our Lake Ontario, our rivers are at threat with a federal government that won't act and a provincial government, to date, that hasn't. We need more active intervention on this file. We need more active intervention.

I'll note that on March 31, Toronto city council, equally aware of this problem, passed a resolution put forward by Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Sarah Doucette—two sensible councillors—asking Enbridge to install automatic shut-off valves on either side of the city of Toronto's major watercourses.

"City council request that the National Energy Board not allow Enbridge the leave to open on the grounds that condition 16 of the National Energy Board's decision has not been fully met at water crossings along line 9B and therefore the greater Toronto area's drinking water have been left at risk."

Their summary noted:

"The NEB approved Enbridge's application, subject to 30 detailed conditions. These 30 conditions need to be met before Enbridge can apply for a leave to open"—to actually carry forward the project they want to carry forward.

The city of Toronto and other intervenors have no formal input into that leave-to-open decision, but the National Energy Board asked Enbridge to consult with the city. The city notes that the Canadian codes and

standards association require that automatic shut-off valves be placed on both sides of major water crossings, which include the Humber, Don and Rouge, as well as other watercourses within Toronto.

Speaker, it is a good thing for us to debate a future law, and hopefully a future law will be put in place with the budget, the enforcement, the other coterie of laws that are needed to make it effective, but it is just as important to use the laws that are already on the books to protect the water that we depend on every day to drink. We don't want to be in Hamilton, Kingston, Toronto, Belleville, Brockville or Cornwall—take your pick—in a situation where we have to shut down our water system.

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The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority expressed huge concerns about the lack of automatic shut-off valves for the pipeline crossing through the Don. They said that there were not enough automatic shut-off valves in the GTA, given the significance of our watershed, urban population and infrastructure, especially our drinking water intakes and source water protection areas. The TRCA—Toronto and Region Conservation Authority—pointed out that it would take up to two hours before Enbridge even detects a leak or spill through their automated system, and then for the automatic shut-off valves to be triggered. That means that for more than two hours, oil could be spilling into our rivers and beginning to flow down to our drinking water. The distance between a shut-off valve and the watercourse means that even when the valve is closed, the oil remaining in the pipeline may continue to flow towards the watercourse.

No one in this city, and no one in any of the cities along the north shore of Lake Ontario, wants to be in a position where they have to shut down their water system because there's been a pipeline spill and that oil is flowing toward the water intake valves. If you were to shut off the water in Toronto, because the water is supplied also to the cities north of Toronto, you're talking about 3.2 million people who would be deprived of drinking water—totally unmanageable, Speaker.

We need to use the laws that are already on the books. We need to be willing to push into uncharted territory to protect our drinking water. We know that the federal government isn't going to do that. It's up to us here at the provincial level. The National Energy Board is in a fetal position on the floor with regard to protecting the environment. It's left to us to do something about it.

I want to look to the future and why this bill will be totally ineffective if we don't have action on climate change. Everyone knows that the sewage systems in our cities and towns in this province were designed for a climate that no longer exists. It's over. What was a 100-year storm 20 or 30 years ago is now going to be a five- or 10-year storm. That means that we will not only have basements flooded with sewage, but we will also have sewer overflows into the lakes.

There's no question that there will be more intense rainfall events, and we need the planning today for the adaptation. Again, whatever value there is to this bill, if

we don't have green infrastructure, trees, permeable paving—all of those elements—along with an investment in a sewer water system, then our lakes and our rivers will be flooded with sewage on a regular basis. This bill will not be enough.

Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller released a report a few years ago in 2012. It was called Ready for Change? An Assessment of Ontario's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. He felt that the province was starting to address some of the issues around climate change. He endorsed the government's plan, Climate Ready: Ontario's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2014), but he did note very substantial gaps in that plan that will affect us, that affect the course of this bill. And this is another matter, but where the Environmental Commissioner was prescient: "For example, despite the importance of our energy distribution and transmission system," says Miller, "the Climate Ready plan released in 2011 does not identify any actions to be taken by the Ministry of Energy. This concerns me because scientists are predicting an increase in devastating ice storms, like the one that toppled power lines and transmission towers and caused blackouts in 1998."

Well, he said that in 2012. In December 2013, the ice storm swept through the GTA, causing blackouts—for some people, for weeks. We weren't ready, Speaker. An adaptation plan for our energy system—our electricity system—was not carried through and, as far as I can tell, is still not in the process of being carried through.

The Environmental Commissioner noted that climate change threatened thousands of tourism and recreation jobs, and hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the tourism industry, and noted a few rainfall events: "In July of 2009, Hamilton got 109 millimetres of rain in two hours, one of the biggest bursts of rain on record in Canada. Insurance losses were between \$200 and \$300 million." That followed "unprecedented rainfall in Peterborough in 2004, floods swept through the downtown, causing more than \$112 million in damage." Toronto in 2013: \$600 million in damage. The costs are mounting up.

In addition to this bill, there has to be a plan not only to slow down global warming but to adapt to that warming that we aren't going to be able to avoid at all. Without that adaptation and that preparation, we cannot keep our lakes clean. We can't keep them drinkable or swimmable or fishable; they won't be.

Let's look at some of the key provisions of the bill itself. I have set out what I think is the context: a need for enforcement, the imminence of the threat and the scale of the problems facing us in the future.

The bill's stated purpose is "to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved" in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. A fair goal. I think it makes sense to try to mobilize people and try to bring communities onside and get them involved in protecting the health of

the lakes. There's certainly the interest out there; no doubt about it, Speaker.

The bill's preamble refers to the Great Lakes Strategy's vision of Great Lakes that are drinkable, swimmable and fishable; something we agree with. Not a problem.

There are already several statutes that protect water and the Great Lakes, but these are spread across different ministries and jurisdictions. This act brings that together and focuses attention on specific areas within the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

The act has several components—I'm going to address a few of them here—including the Guardians' Council, the Great Lakes Strategy, target and plans, proposals and geographically focused initiatives.

The Great Lakes Guardians' Council: The bill establishes a Great Lakes Guardians' Council made up of the Minister of the Environment as well as other stakeholders with connections to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin. The council will meet at least once a year to discuss priorities for action, funding measures, targets and initiatives.

It's important to say that this Guardians' Council is a forum. It's not a body that has decision-making power. As best I can tell—and perhaps the minister will enlarge upon this at a later point—it's a place where you get all the stakeholders together to try to hash through the problems of the day; what interests will be touched by addressing or not addressing those issues; and, hopefully, developing a framework of thought and concept that will allow the government of the day to move forward on those issues.

The minister, as he or she considers advisable, may invite other Great Lakes ministers to the council meetings. That would be other ministers of the crown who have some involvement in the Great Lakes Strategy, such as the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The minister shall, as he or she considers advisable, invite representatives from municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities with a relationship to the basin, and environmental organizations, the scientific community, and the industrial, agricultural, recreational and tourism sectors in the basin—a pretty broad net. There is always the danger that it will just be a talking shop. But again, I think it could be a useful tool for a minister to be able to canvass opinion across a broad range of interests fairly quickly.

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I'll say, Speaker, that should the bill proceed, should this be put in place, it is going to be fairly critical for it to be open, for the public to be able to follow the discussions, for there to be a public record, and it would be advisable for the minister to make sure that it was pretty broad in terms of those who attend. If we're going to have that sort of body, openness and a broad spectrum of opinion are going to be required.

The Great Lakes Strategy: The act requires the minister to maintain and update Ontario's Great Lakes

Strategy, which was released in December 2012, and to review the strategy at least every six years. The strategy must include principles and performance measures as well as monitoring and reporting provisions. The minister must report to the assembly every three years—I think that's a good idea: having the minister report, having an opportunity to question the minister, requiring the minister to highlight what's been done. I assume the minister will not highlight what has been omitted; that will be our job. We will bring it to the minister's attention, no doubt about it.

I think it's a good idea for the minister to develop a strategy. I think it's a good idea for him or her to report on the progress of that strategy. But I add this, Speaker: When you put together a strategy, you should cost it. I've been through a lot of organizations in my lifetime and I've dealt with a lot of phantom goals. If you don't have to cost it, then you can have 100 goals. If you have to cost it, very quickly you realize you aren't going to be doing 100 things; you may be doing five. I think it's going to be important for the integrity of this process to have price tags affixed to initiatives so that people will be forced to make real choices and forced to narrow their priorities to those that are actually doable.

Targets and plans: The act allows the Minister of the Environment to set a qualitative or quantitative target to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. It says the minister "may" establish a plan to achieve this target after consulting with other Great Lakes ministers. I would hope that the minister would have to establish a plan. We will see.

The minister must specifically set a target to address algae blooms within two years. No question, two years—I mean, you could quibble, you could say one year. My guess is, to actually go out and consult broadly, to look at the science—sure, two years may be a reasonable length of time, but whatever comes back has to be concrete. People who live along the shores of Lake Erie, people who love to go to Lake Erie, who love to go to Long Point, who love to go to Port Dover—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's lots.

They have to know there will be concrete goals set. It's obvious that we would want a virtual elimination of algae blooms within a set period of time. My hope is that in fact that one comes forward very quickly.

In addition, the Minister of Natural Resources "may," and it should be "shall," set a target of preventing the net loss of wetlands. I actually think that the government should be looking at restoring wetlands. It's critical to the health of the lake, critical to the ecosystem, critical to species diversity—not just protecting but expanding.

The targets need to be concrete, measurable and ambitious. I actually had a chance to look through the Great Lakes Strategy from 2012, read some sections in detail, others I could see that I'd read much of that before in other circumstances. But there was a vagueness in the targets that I think has to be avoided in whatever comes out of this bill.

Protecting water for human and ecological health—we've got the goal here: "Drinking water meets a high standard of safety—as demonstrated by municipal residential drinking water systems meeting provincial drinking water standards."

So you'd ask, is that all municipal water systems? Is that some municipal water systems? Is that most municipal water systems? It has to be clearly defined.

"Reduced levels of harmful pollutants in the Great Lakes ecosystem—as demonstrated by declining fish tissue contaminant levels and fish consumption advisories...." Well, you can decline from 100 to 99 and that's a decline. You can decline from 100 to 90 and that's a decline. Speaker, when a plan is set forward, there have to be meaningful targets that people can assess and that a minister or government can be held accountable for. That's what we need in setting these targets.

The bill also provides for proposals and geographically focused initiatives. The minister may request initiation of these initiatives, may ask for amendments to them. He can actually have a fair amount of impact on local zoning and local planning. And there will be times and places where that will be of great consequence, because the government's responsibility is for the Great Lakes basin as a whole, for the watershed as a whole. They may have a broader vision than a municipality; there may be a zoning decision that will conflict with good environmental planning. It's useful for the minister to be able to speak to this.

I do have a concern, though, Speaker, and that's that we'd like to hear from the minister how it's going to be ensured that there won't be a downloading of responsibilities on municipalities. Fair enough that you want to have a legislative framework within which they operate. Fair enough that you want to make sure that they have regard for a higher level of environmental protection. But governments come and go, ministers come and go, fairness comes and goes, and municipalities are often stretched to their financial limits now. We have to have an explanation of how downloading will be avoided in this context.

There's a concern that the latest version of this bill adds a new clause allowing the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations that exempt "any person or class of persons from any provisions of this act or the regulations...." The Great Lakes Protection Act Alliance strongly opposes the addition of this clause, remembering how a similar clause was used by the Ministry of Natural Resources to gut the Endangered Species Act. So the question here for the minister and the ministry is, what is the basis for any exemptions? How does the bill ensure they won't be abused? Because absent a clear mechanism for making sure that this doesn't allow any minister to undermine the fundamentals of the bill, we'd have to oppose this. And I would ask other legislators to oppose this. An exemption that allows the purpose and the thrust of the bill to be profoundly undermined doesn't make any sense to me, Speaker—none.

We've seen commentary posted by a number of those who are stakeholders and have an interest in the bill. The

Great Lakes Protection Act Alliance is a group brought together that contains Ecojustice, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Environmental Defence, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Canada and Sierra Club Ontario. So a fairly substantial body of environmental non-governmental organizations—although would Ducks Unlimited call themselves that? They may well—certainly people who represent a broad spectrum of opinion, a fair amount of knowledge. They have an interest in this bill and they have been a driving force in making sure that the government of the day addresses the question of the Great Lakes.

They have concerns about improvements they want to see in this bill. They want to have the act's purposes strengthened to specifically refer to coastal areas, migratory habitats, important bird and biodiversity areas, and add urban and rural storm water and promoting green infrastructure as an example of response to climate change. It seems like a reasonable thrust to me. I'm sure that when we have committee hearings they will expand on their concerns here.

It certainly makes sense to me that they're pressing for formal recognition of green infrastructure. As you're probably aware, Speaker, if a city has a large canopy, a very large planting of trees, those trees can hold a lot of water in rainstorms, and prevent sewer overflow. Their leaves hold just huge quantities of water. It's a way of slowing down the impact. It gives us shade, cools down cities, holds water and is a lot less expensive than building a lot of concrete sewer lines, or a fairly cheap supplement or additional measure to make the impact of our investments go further.

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They suggest that there be an alignment in the direction of all ministries with the Great Lakes Strategy so that all ministries that have any impact on the Great Lakes will have their goals and actions aligned with it. They suggest a strengthening around targets. The minister, they suggest, must set within a reasonable time frame at least one target with respect to each of the act's purposes. The minister shall—not may—prepare a plan to achieve an established target. The Minister of Natural Resources shall—not may—establish a target to address the loss of wetlands. The target will seek to address or reverse wetland loss.

The Minister of Natural Resources may only set a target for wetlands, since wetlands fall within MNR jurisdiction. Otherwise, only the Ministry of the Environment is responsible for setting targets, making it very clear who is accountable, who has authority, who has responsibility. They emphasize that they have a very strong objection to the no-exemptions clause. They don't want exemptions to be part of this bill.

I gather, and my colleague from the Progressive Conservative Party raised this in her speech, that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has concerns. They are a substantial organization. They're ones that should be part of this process. I'm assuming they've talked with the minister already. I have no doubt that they will appear before

a committee. I think we should listen to them. Where there are problems that are demonstrably present, where we can see how we can reconcile the different interests, we should be trying to accommodate what their concerns are. They are a thoughtful group.

AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, has concerns as well. I've mentioned this, about the question of downloading. They want to be reassured that they won't simply have to assume costs for environmental protection that have been left behind by the province. I think it's a reasonable request on their part. We want our cities, our municipalities and our towns to function well. They can't function well if they're always stressed financially. They, in particular, say the province and the federal government should be responsible for funding policies to protect the basin, including financial support for capital upgrades that may be needed by municipalities, agriculture and industry. I think it's reasonable to say that the senior levels of government should be carrying the bulk of the tab for all of this.

Speaker, if you start going through the numbers around the Great Lakes, they're quite extraordinary, and you can go on for a long time. I won't go on for a long time. But I'll just note that more than 80% of Ontarians get their drinking water from the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes make up 20% of Earth's fresh surface water—it's extraordinary. But the Great Lakes replenish slowly, at about 1% per year. Effectively, what we have is what's left over from the last ice age. If we lose it, if we mess it up, we don't get a second round for a long time—a long, long time. That's why having a bill that is thorough, strategic and effective in partnership with other actions, like action on climate change, action on climate change adaptation, and why enforcement and budgeting are all needed to actually make sure that these Great Lakes that define us are protected by us. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Toronto–Danforth. Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am a big fan of the member for Toronto–Danforth, and I want to thank him for what I think was an extraordinarily intelligent and constructive speech. I'll do something ministers are not supposed to do: I liked some of the critiques you made, and I hope that we can work together to try to improve the bill a bit.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No, but I really do.

I want to address two things that the member said, because I thought that was a very thoughtful speech, and very helpful. One is on downloading to municipalities. I want to give you my assurance that that is the exact opposite of what we're doing. When I was mayor of that suburb of Kenora, I watched the mayor of Kenora—I'm joking. Winnipeg is a suburb of Kenora; that's my joke.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd never heard it referred to that way.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes. Dave Canfield was the mayor there, and I watched the health and social service downloading, and how frustrating it was for a small

municipality like Kenora, with 19 bridges, to absorb the kind of capital downloading that they saw. I'd rather jump off the top of the Ferguson Block than ever be party to that.

The second thing was money. You're right, because it does give you discipline. There's \$15 million a year here. I wish it was more, but given the constrained period we're in, it's significant new money annually. I hope we can share in that conversation.

But I just want to point out that the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills said there was nothing wrong with the Great Lakes and they're getting better. That's not my read on it, Mr. Speaker. We have incredible problems with pharmaceuticals and with invasive species. We have acidification destroying the daphnia, the basic phytoplankton that is the basis of our life. We've got pharmaceuticals—neonics, as they're called, actually break down in water, and what we're finding in our research is that, never mind bees, they're terrible to water invertebrates and amphibians, because they are breaking down in our water system and becoming four or five times more concentrated than they are when they're laid in the fields. So we have that.

We also have the Invasive Species Act, the toxics act, which we're applying, the climate change work we're doing, and the water source protection act, so there are many pieces of legislation that have to come together.

Thank you very much to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his leadership on this. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act. I've listened very carefully to the comments made by the member from Toronto–Danforth, and I know he's passionate about the environmental file. Some of the concerns that I've heard brought up I've heard not only in this bill, but in the previous bill the government brought in on the Great Lakes Protection Act.

There is a real concern out there about what's going to be downloaded. You may make the promise now that it won't happen. However, it's like the Ontario Clean Water Act. We're seeing tremendous costs that will be associated with that down the road as we introduce source water protection. We know that already. That has happened. We see it and we understand that that is a fact of life.

However, it's so easy to sit and pass legislation in this Legislature and say, "Well, no, we're going to absorb all the costs." In fact, Mr. Speaker, you know that in almost all cases someone else pays the costs, and that's a real problem that we will have, I think, with some of the work around the Great Lakes Protection Act.

I don't think there's a soul who doesn't want to see the Great Lakes—you know, they are a group of lakes that are the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The jewel.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: —the jewel of clean water on the whole planet, not just in Canada, not just in the US,

but right across the world. I don't think there's anything else like it, so we would all be fools if we did not want to make sure that that group of lakes were kept completely clean and perfect for many, many generations to come.

But we also have to look at all of our other jurisdictional partners who we have to be concerned about, as well: all the American states that abut them, and American cities like Chicago, Detroit and all those places. They all have a role to play, too.

We can stand here, say we're doing a wonderful job and pass this legislation, but there's a lot of other work that has to be done down the road. I could go on all day on this, and maybe I will get a chance to chat to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I am absolutely pleased, privileged and proud to be able to stand and speak to my caucus member the member from Toronto–Danforth and the absolutely wonderful presentation that he put on for us today. I'll tell you, I was completely engulfed in everything that he had to say. It was really a complete learning experience, with the in-depth knowledge and work that he has done on this bill. I'm happy to hear the minister thank the member for that work and recognize the work that he puts into this type of bill.

The member raised some really great issues about what this bill would do for our future, when we have climate change and invasive species, and we hear about algae bloom and what that's doing to Lake Erie, and the concerns that are happening with our lakes.

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So I'm pleased to see a bill like this come forward, but the member also raised concerns that there has to be teeth and that it has to be the minister "shall" instead of "may." He said that quite a few times. I heard the minister say that those are things that are being looked at. I hope so.

Another concern was the fact that there has to be money put behind this to make sure it can work, so that municipalities aren't being downloaded with the costs and concerns to ensure that the Great Lakes Strategy vision can live up to that vision, saying that the Great Lakes are drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

I know that's something that I, of course, love to enjoy as I live in the beautiful province of Ontario and the country of Canada. I know that many of us do, because if we travel to other parts of the world, we know that they don't have the beauties and pleasures of just that clean drinking water.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this Great Lakes Protection Act today, and thank you to the members who spoke before me.

I just want to add and reiterate how vital the protection of the Great Lakes is for our communities and our province. The Great Lakes are an international symbol of this country and especially our province, and the diversity and vitality must be maintained through our greatest efforts.

Without the wildlife diversity, the watershed dynamic and the way the waters of the Great Lakes have shaped our province, we should simply not be the same. Our history would be entirely different, and so would we.

In Durham, where we border Lake Ontario to the south, I know how much opportunity the lakes provide for people to experience nature, to enjoy the outdoors and the waterways that come with the lake, and to take pride in being from a lush community that borders it.

That is why I'm glad we are expanding the minister's powers to prevent the loss of the ecosystem that characterizes the lakes, commit us to reducing algae levels and enforce monitoring and reporting standards. It would also bolster our abilities and the minister's purview for combatting the threat of carbon monoxide acidification.

We will open the conversation and ensure that we remain engaged on the protection of the lakes, as well as equipping our communities with the resources they need to help preserve the waterways.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this great bit of legislation, and thanks to the minister for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Toronto–Danforth has two minutes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You say that as if you're not looking forward to it, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, you were so nice to the member from Niagara Falls, I was a little hurt.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I know it's a brutal place some days.

I want to thank the minister, and I want to thank the members from Simcoe North, Hamilton Mountain and Durham for their kind words and their substantive comment.

Minister, the question of downloading is a live one. The member from Simcoe North came back to that as well. It is going to be an issue that you obviously have concern about and we have concern about. We're going to want to see it addressed in committee.

I think all of us have had a life beside this lake. I have to say that, two summers ago, I had relatives come to visit me from Latvia. I had visited them back in the 1970s, and we walked on the beaches along the Baltic. They were just completely blown away by the fact that we were in the middle of a continent and it looked like they were on the ocean. They loved walking along the beach. They loved the feel of, the sound of and the look of Lake Ontario. They couldn't get over it.

I have to say, for everyone in this chamber and, frankly, everyone in this province, that the protection of these lakes that have given us so much is of crucial importance for our lives and our sense of self.

Minister, you have a very tough task ahead of you. As legislators, we have a tough task ahead of us to make sure that this bill is right and that the resources are there. Minister, you're going to have to think a lot about this one, and your government is going to have to put the resources in, and occasionally you're going to have to

bite if you want to see the protection that needs to be there for the water.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act, introduced by our wonderful Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I would also like to say that I'm delighted to join the discussion today, and the member from Toronto–Danforth has done a wonderful, eloquent job at speaking to this bill as well.

Mr. Mike Colle: Say you're sharing your time.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Sorry. I am sharing my time—thank you. I will be sharing my time with the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Eglinton–Lawrence.

The Great Lakes are one of Ontario's greatest assets. The region has an annual GDP of \$5.2 trillion, representing the fourth-largest economy in the world. That economy includes almost 75% of Canada's manufacturing; over half of the total trade in merchandise between Canada and the United States; 80% of Ontario's power generation; and 95% of Ontario's agricultural lands depend on the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River basin.

The region holds one fifth of all the fresh water on Earth. It provides more than 80% of Ontario's drinking water and is home to the world's most unique ecosystems. Residents and visitors alike enjoy its unparalleled beauty and its many recreational opportunities.

For millennia, indigenous peoples have called the Great Lakes home. The Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe creation stories tell of this region being created for mutual sustenance, a spiritual landscape with great powers of regeneration.

It is undeniable that the Great Lakes are a foundation for Ontario's strength and success. However, our Great Lakes are under stress. Lakes Michigan, Erie and Ontario are all in decline, despite very credible efforts by governments, municipalities and NGOs to mitigate the effects of human activity. The health of the Great Lakes is under threat from the increased levels of sewage and stormwater pollution, new and historic manufacturing and industrial chemicals of concern, urban growth and population pressures, rising levels of phosphorus and other nutrients that generate harmful algae blooms and cause oxygen depletion, degradation of shorelines and, of course, invasive species.

Climate change is also challenging the resilience of the Great Lakes to the problems that can arise from severe weather conditions and changes in the thaw-and-freeze cycle. While the health of the Great Lakes has been improved through past and current measures, the health of three of Ontario's four Great Lakes remains in decline due to these pressures.

If we don't take stronger collaborative action to address the challenges faced by our Great Lakes, we can expect economic implications such as increased costs for treating drinking water, decreases in property value, especially for those on the shorelines, lost productivity from illness, increased health care costs, and revenue losses for recreation, tourism and industries.

Despite the size and importance of the Great Lakes to our economy, quality of life and environment, there is currently no comprehensive legislation that provides clear direction and requirements to protect the Great Lakes. Our minister is well aware that we need an integrated and coordinated watershed approach to tackle the present challenges. The proposed Great Lakes Protection Act recognizes the importance of the Great Lakes to our environmental sustainability, our economic growth, and individual health and well-being.

The act recognizes that the long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes is under threat; that we must take immediate action by establishing clear protection and restoration targets that will help all partners work toward common restoration and protection outcomes; that we must develop geographically focused initiatives to better coordinate local action and address local issues; and that we must work together across sectors, municipalities and state borders to help restore protection and keep the Great Lakes healthy for generations to come.

To increase collaboration, the act will establish the Great Lakes Guardians' Council, an unprecedented gathering of ministers, municipalities and First Nations with the farming, environmental, conservation, industrial, recreational and scientific communities. The council will provide a forum to build and implement the strong inter-jurisdictional agreements necessary to keep the Great Lakes healthy for generations to come.

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My community of Kingston and the Islands is located within the St. Lawrence River watershed, and it's one of the many communities in Ontario that will benefit from more responsible stewardship of the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River region. We have a responsibility to steward the Great Lakes for the continued prosperity of our communities, so it is my pleasure to lend my wholehearted support to this bill.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It gives me pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act. My riding is the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, and as you might surmise from its name, it is directly on the shore of Lake Ontario. Therefore, to my residents, this is not just an abstract discussion that we're having here about protecting the Great Lakes. Pieces of this legislation will directly impact the life and enjoyment of residents of my community.

In fact, over the first half of my life, I lived directly on the waterfront in Etobicoke. Starting from my early years, I saw the transformation, the degradation and then the slow remediation of an urban waterfront, which has been wonderful to observe. As a young'un, the first public policy debates that I attended were on the regional remedial action plan for the waterfront here in the GTA.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You were a rap artist.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: A rap artist, indeed. I won't be sharing any of that with the Legislature this afternoon, though.

The projects that I observed over my lifetime in a community like Etobicoke–Lakeshore have done tremendous work to restore wetlands and habitats. While those projects are important, they haven't been part of a broader plan to look after all of the Great Lakes that we have in Ontario. We're blessed to have four of the five Great Lakes within our boundaries or on the edge of our boundaries.

As we know, the Great Lakes regional economy is the fourth-largest economy in the world; 75% of the manufacturing of Canada, 80% of Ontario's power generation and 95% of Ontario's agricultural lands depend on the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. As the Great Lakes are so important to the future of Ontario, it's very important that we look after the health of the Great Lakes.

The health of the Great Lakes is under threat from a number of factors: increased levels of harmful pollutants, urban growth, rising levels of phosphorus, hardened shorelines and invasive species. Over the last 15 years, changes in the Great Lakes have revealed disruptions to the food chain and increasing algal blooms. Climate change, of course, is also another factor that has a detrimental effect on the Great Lakes and their resiliency to be able to sustain the challenges that lie ahead. This government continues to take action on climate change and take the necessary steps to ensure protection of our environment.

For all of these reasons, it's necessary that this legislation that will protect the Great Lakes is so important and needs to be adopted by this Legislature. We have to protect the Great Lakes. Where we find they're in decline, we must restore them to good health so they're drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

Despite the size and importance of the Great Lakes to our economy, quality of life and environment, there is no current comprehensive plan that provides clear direction and requirements to protect the lakes. The tools provided in this legislation will help meet the goals of the Great Lakes Strategy and the Canada-Ontario agreement, such as the ability to establish targets and to develop geographically focused initiatives. That's why I'm so pleased that our government is proposing a strengthened Great Lakes Protection Act.

This act will establish a Great Lakes Guardians' Council, which will provide a collaborative forum for discussing Great Lakes issues and priorities. The council will be a forum to set priorities for action and identify partnerships and potential sources of funding. As the member for Toronto–Danforth alluded to, I too am very concerned that this does not turn into a downloading exercise and that we find creative ways of financing the improvements that will need to be undertaken to protect the Great Lakes.

The legislation will also require the monitoring of and regular reporting on the health of the Great Lakes, including working to develop a target for the reduction of algal blooms within two years. Algal blooms are an issue for the residents who live in Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Again, this is something that residents of my community can attest to.

The ability of the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to establish a target for preventing the net loss of wetlands is also extremely important, and as we've seen the degradation of the shoreline over a number of decades, the ability to not only protect the wetlands that we have but to begin to restore and rehabilitate areas that have been degraded is very important.

I could speak a great deal more about this, but I'm happy to turn over the balance of my time to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in terms of this bill, the one aspect of it which I think needs to be appreciated and strengthened is the fact that you just cannot clean up the Great Lakes from within the Great Lakes; you have to look at the land use planning around the Great Lakes watersheds and wetland areas. What flows into the lakes from all the rivers and streams and creeks and the type of land use that's taking place—you can clean and put in, like at Lake Wilcox; there's an artificial lung there. But you have to have proper land use planning. You can't do what we're doing in Toronto. We have a wall-to-wall concrete jungle of condos. We've lost our waterfront here; it's just concrete. It's like a Soviet-style wall between the people and the lake, and that isn't good for Lake Ontario. People talk about jets. I say, "Well, yes, you're against the jets. Why aren't you against the concrete walls and the approval of condo after condo after condo?"

That's why, a number of years ago—I think not too many were here. I was looking around to see anybody who was here at that time, but there weren't—about 10 or 15 years ago, I started a project trying to protect the source waters of the Great Lakes. I was trying to protect an area called the Oak Ridges moraine. I took it upon myself to walk from Peterborough all the way to King City to try to rally people to understand that we couldn't pave all the watercourses at the point of where they start. That's what they were doing.

In the 1980s and 1990s, everything was being paved. Farmland was being sold off, paved over. It was easy to build developments on farmland. So we were losing all the sensitive wetlands and the water sources. The Oak Ridges moraine was the rain barrel of Lake Ontario.

You can clean up the beaches down here in Toronto, but what good is cleaning up the beaches if you've got all this crap coming down from the Oak Ridges moraine? That's what they were doing. The Humber was polluted, the Don was polluted, the Ganaraska was polluted, the Credit was polluted, the Rouge, because of all the dumping and all the uncontrolled development taking place.

After about five years of talking about it in this House—where nobody hardly listened for five years—the Conservative government, when about 5,000 people showed up at a meeting in Richmond Hill, said, "Oh, we

see the light. Maybe we're going to stop the paving of the Oak Ridges moraine."

That's what is so critically important, that in this legislation you can't clean up the Great Lakes unless you do something about land use planning. That is something that we've got to be much more visionary about. I think the member from Mississippi Mills talked about the fact that we have to get people involved. The government can't do all this. People will do it if you partner with people. People have the right intentions, but you can't have this top-down policy: "Here, we've got this grandiose plan for the Great Lakes." The ordinary farmer, the ordinary hunter, angler, the person who walks in the park, a cyclist, a person who owns land, a little piece of property near the waterfront—they've got to be part of it, but they aren't going to be part of it if it's a top-down, "we-know-everything" approach.

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And I know Lake Simcoe had the same thing. You've got to engage the people. That's what I think is missing in this bill. It's a needed bill, because we obviously can't have this ad hoc approach because we're dealing with all these other US jurisdictions, the states. We're dealing with about 500 municipalities, and each one has a different set of rules about what they can dump and the type of sewage system, and land use planning. So we need some coordination, and that's what is good about this bill. This coordination is critical so that we're working together towards the same goal. I think that's the most important aspect of this bill—and to develop some partnerships and co-operation with all parts of society, not just the people here at Queen's Park. They don't know everything.

You've got to get out, get your boots on, walk along the shores of our Great Lakes and appreciate the fact that these lakes are an incredible world phenomenon. Most people don't realize that if you emptied Lake Superior, you could cover all of North America one foot deep. That is how big, deep and profound Lake Superior is.

Nobody understands how much value these lakes have. We sometimes take them for granted because we're blessed that we have so many wonderful waterways all across this great province. So we have to get that sensitivity to appreciate that this water is a very, very rare resource that we're not paying enough attention to.

One of the things that worries me most is this addiction to bottled water. People think, "Oh well, I don't have to worry about the water in Lake Erie or Lake Ontario because I can go buy bottled water." You see them in the grocery stores now, people buying water in these big plastic, PCB-type containers. They're drinking that and they say, "What do I care about the water from the tap? I can drink this plastic water."

That is a dangerous trend. What it does is it gets people desensitized about the necessity to have good, clean, local water sources, not bottled plastic water that you pay—I think you pay more for a bottle of that plastic water than you pay for gas. I think it's more expensive, which is ridiculous. So people buy this plastic water; they drink it and drink it, and they don't worry about the

critical need to pay attention to the water quality in our Great Lakes.

If you look at our Great Lakes, they're endless sources of everything recreation—and we've heard about the economy and the beauty. But as you know, one of the things that's also happening is this development of waterfront sprawl, I call it. Everybody wants to build a subdivision or buy a big, beautiful home on the waterfront, wherever it may be. It could be a river. We've got to be very careful with that, because I think shorelines should be public. They should be under public supervision. What they've done in Toronto is basically concrete the whole thing. That isn't good for the lake, for the people, us and our kids.

I don't know if you were ever a kid who used to go smelt fishing. You know, the smelts have disappeared from Lake Ontario. We used to go down to Port Credit at this time of year. It was Stanley Cup time. We would go and get garbage bags full of smelts. You go to Port Credit today, Mr. Speaker, and you aren't going to catch any smelts at all—zero. They've disappeared.

These smelts were eaten by the people of Toronto. They were fried up with a little bit of bread crumb, a little bit of egg. Everybody ate smelts, and now they've disappeared.

Why have they disappeared? Do you know why the smelts have disappeared? It's because of the fact that we haven't paid enough attention to what drains into Lake Ontario or the invasive species in Lake Ontario. So we've lost this wonderful little fish. I know nobody thinks that while we catch these big trout up here in the north, but the little smelt is gone. I think that little smelt is representative of what's happened to our Great Lakes.

You've got to pay attention to the small details, and then the big picture takes care of itself. That is what I wanted around the Great Lakes. Get the public involved, not just the gurus at Queen's Park. Everybody's got to be involved—and they will be involved, because they love their Great Lakes and they love their water.

That's all I've got to say, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak for two minutes about this—and yes, it will be exciting, because where I live in the riding of Nipissing, the city of North Bay and the surrounding area, we are blessed to have Lake Nipissing, which flows into the Great Lakes. This is one of the sources that we were talking about.

All I'm going to suggest in the minute and a half I have is that I'm hoping that the Liberals, who are presenting this bill, don't botch it as much as they've botched the fisheries in Lake Nipissing in my hometown of North Bay. This can't be a repeat of what we saw them do there.

They have completely botched the fisheries in Lake Nipissing. I call it a catch-and-release lake today. You cannot keep a pickerel out of Lake Nipissing that is shorter than 46 centimetres; that's 18 inches. The only

fish you can keep now from Lake Nipissing are 18 inches or greater, and I must confess, Speaker, I must not be the greatest fisherman in the world, because I've never caught a pickerel that's 18 inches or greater. I've never seen one, to be perfectly frank.

The problem is that the Liberal government has botched the entire management of the lake so badly that they will not allow restocking, even though the community groups have offered to pay for the restocking program themselves. This government, up to and including this week, has said that restocking is not going to happen in Lake Nipissing. They will not address the fact that the cormorants have taken out hundreds of thousands of pounds of fish as well, and they will not use a cormorant cull to satisfy the Lake Nipissing fisheries.

That's an example of what we can expect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: In the last two days, I've been lucky enough to be here for Bill 37, the invasive species bill, and talk about zebra mussels. I've been here today to listen to Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

If you take a look at my riding of Niagara Falls, we have beautiful Fort Erie that sits on Lake Erie, we have Niagara-on-the-Lake that sits on Lake Ontario and—some of you people might have heard of it—we also have Niagara Falls.

But here are the concerns with the bill, and I wish I could have talked to the minister about them. There's no real funding in the bill, same as they have with the invasive species bill. Bill 66 offers the opportunity to download on municipalities. Even though the minister said that he doesn't want that to happen, it doesn't say it in the bill, and that's important.

The problem is there isn't a lot of hard action in the bill. I'll give you a couple of examples; I'm going to try to get through them in my allotted time.

Section 9(1): The minister "may" establish targets relating to the Great Lakes.

Section 9(3): The Minister of Natural Resources "may" establish targets protecting wetlands.

Section 11(1): The minister "may" appoint a body to implement proposals regarding geographic areas around the Great Lakes.

Cabinet "may" make regulations to protect areas to which the bill applies.

Here's the problem, and here's something that happens all the time: When I was involved with bargaining—and I did that a lot of times. I did over 150 collective agreements. In the collective agreements, we're always looking for soft words. One of the softest words you can put in a collective agreement is "may"; make no mistake about it.

What you have to do, if you're serious about fixing the Great Lakes—and believe me, we'd better be serious about it, because we had some examples from our lead here about what's going on in Lake Erie—you have to put words in place that aren't going to say "may." You have to get rid of the weasel words that are in the bill.

Let's put in what should be in, and what should be in are "will," "must" or "shall." They're the types of words that you need in this bill because we have to protect our Great Lakes for our kids and our grandkids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I've really enjoyed the opportunity that I've had this afternoon to listen to speakers from all three parties speak with passion and with eloquence regarding Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act—obviously something very important.

1750

In particular, I want to reference my good friend and colleague, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence. He talked at length about his own experience from a number of years ago. While I wasn't serving at that time, back in 2000, 2001, 2002, as a member of provincial Parliament, I did have the privilege of working here and around this place as a staff person to members of provincial Parliament.

I remember the member from Eglinton—Lawrence dedicating himself, as he referenced, in that march, in that journey that he took across the Oak Ridges moraine. I say that it was his tireless efforts and his enthusiasm and his passion for defending and finding ways creatively to convince others in power at that time to enhance and protect the Oak Ridges moraine that actually led the then government of the day, the Conservative government of the day, I think somewhat belatedly, to actually see the light around that particular issue. It was, from my perspective as a York region resident at that time, a very belated attempt on the part of the Conservative government to try to respond favourably or to get in front of a parade—by "parade," I'm not just talking about the march the member from Eglinton—Lawrence from our caucus led—to get ahead of an issue that was bubbling up throughout the greater Toronto and Hamilton area at that particular point in time.

So to that member, to every member who has spoken from our side of the Legislature, and frankly even to those who have spoken from the opposition caucuses, with the passion and with the concern and care that they have for this incredible resource that belongs to all of us, it is heartening to see. It's why it's important for us to move forward with this balanced legislation. I certainly sincerely hope that we do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to speak today on this bill. I think that we've looked back, and we definitely have some concerns. There's a lot of talk about cost—no source—or talk about, will there or will there not be downloading? We talked about the guardians' council—quite a name. There's no indication of what the cost will be or where it will come from.

We heard a lot of talk today—and it was a PC government that put a lot of these protection areas in place, if you look back. It was a PC government, the Harris government, that put the Oak Ridges moraine in. It shows that there was concern.

My background is as an engineer, and I like to think that we use science. If we're going to really have any legislation or anything that does something—we've been cleaning up the lakes and they have improved much over the last 30 or 40 years—we must include all the partners that are around, all the people who border on the Great Lakes. The majority of them, or at least a good portion of them, are in the US. A lot of the issues we're looking at are not Ontario-made. They come from the Ohio Valley, they come from Michigan. They have a great interest in working too, but you can only have so many committees looking after these Great Lakes. If you're going to have results, you've got to do something that actually works.

In working with our partners and coming back—it's like this initiative on climate change, and trying to do it ourselves. Again, these problems don't have borders. If you're going to do anything, you've got to work with your partners to come up with something or you end up bankrupting Ontario, like this party has done.

We have to work on something that has a solution, has a cost to it and has measurable targets. I think we want to see that in the bill, and we're looking for amendments so that we can support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess the member from Eglinton—Lawrence is doing it.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank all those who added interventions: the members from Nipissing, Niagara Falls, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and the minister.

I just think that this bill is imperative because we need to coordinate and establish these partnerships. Right now, there are too many different jurisdictions that don't have

any direction and they have to work together because there's too much at stake.

If we don't work together—we saw what happened in BC just this weekend when there wasn't enough stewardship of the waterways outside Vancouver. You see what happens when people are negligent, and they closed down the coast guard station there. That's what happens. The member from Danforth talked about what happened in Toledo.

These things can happen if you aren't prepared to deal with the serious interventions that are required. You can't do it after the fact.

Right now, we are susceptible to these types of disastrous things, plus, whether you're a denier about climate change or you believe in climate change, the reality is that we've never seen such insane weather in all my years. We had the ice storm. We had that one storm in Toronto where more rain came down in an hour than came down in three months. These crazy things are happening and no one can explain them, so we have to be prepared. You can only be prepared if you're doing this preventive work, if there's coordination, and you have to have people engaged.

That's why I think the minister is the right person to try to get people enthusiastic about being part of this Great Lakes protection, which we need for our children and our children's children. Let's bring the smelts back to Lake Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): On that note, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glenarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
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McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
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Lou Rinaldi
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 16 April 2015

Jeudi 16 avril 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 16 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and,

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Monday, April 27, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Tuesday, April 28, 2015, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 57:

—notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—witnesses are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—the deadline for written submissions is 6 p.m. on the last day of public hearings; and

—that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29; and

—that the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, May 4, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Tuesday, May 5, 2015, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Tuesday, May 5, 2015, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of

all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, May 6, 2015. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 17.

Mr. Bradley.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Pooled registered pension plans are a new type of voluntary, tax-assisted individual retirement savings vehicle. As a new low-cost retirement savings vehicle that is professionally managed and portable from one workplace to another, they're intended to make it easier for employees and self-employed persons to save for retirement. Simply put, PRPPs are a vehicle for the self-employed to be available to invest their retirement savings at a low cost. Contributions are locked in, and benefits at retirement are based on accumulated contributions and investment returns.

The federal government implemented PRPPs for sectors under federal jurisdiction, and also applies to persons employed or self-employed in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The federal Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act and associated regulations came into force on December 14, 2012.

Legislation must be passed by each province before PRPPs can be made available to individuals employed in

provincially regulated sectors and to self-employed individuals working in the provinces. As a result, PRPPs will not be available to the majority of Ontarians until legislation is passed by this House and proclaimed in force, once supporting regulations have been made. That is why we need to move ahead expeditiously with this bill.

The purpose of the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014, is to provide a legal framework for the establishment and administration of PRPPs in Ontario. It would apply to individuals employed in provincially regulated employment, the self-employed in Ontario, as well as individuals employed in federally regulated industries in Ontario whose employers do not offer PRPPs. Given the desire to harmonize PRPPs across the country, the proposed legislation adopts many of the key features of the federal PRPP legislative framework.

Our government recognizes that increasing retirement savings in the province is a complex challenge that requires a multi-faceted approach. Establishing pooled registered pension plans is just one step in our plan, which will encourage investment in voluntary retirement savings tools. That is why I ask the members of this assembly to support Bill 57.

I know that there is a lot of support from members on all sides of the House. The honourable member from York-Simcoe, who had introduced a similar bill previously, said: "I think PRPPs are indeed good and necessary. Obviously, the federal government realized this some time back and passed the legislation that would allow the provinces to implement PRPPs, establishing the minimum standards that all federal PRPPs would have and that PRPP administrators must meet. Each province is responsible for enacting its own PRPP enabling legislation. Quebec has already launched its version of voluntary retirement savings plans. British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan have also passed legislation."

We couldn't agree more that the time is right to move ahead with this bill.

0910

We also have the honourable member for Nepean-Carleton speaking to this bill and saying, "We in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus certainly do appreciate the ability to pool pensions and to have that ability for investment..."

Finally, the MPP for Leeds-Grenville stated in debate, in reference to Bill 57, "I'd really like to have at least one of those members that spoke earlier talk about the government's plans to move this bill through committee and ultimately come back to the House for third reading. That's a request, through you, Speaker, to whoever is finishing the two minutes."

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, it is time we move forward with Bill 57. In the last Parliament, this Legislature was ground to a halt and was unable to move forward. Only 39% of government bills were passed in the last, minority government. That's compared to more than three quarters of bills that were passed going back to 1990.

Voters of Ontario sent a clear message last June. They wanted our government to get on with the business of governing in their best interests.

Speaker, as you know, we introduced this bill in December. There has been considerable debate on this bill. We've heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives. It is time, in our view, that we end second reading and refer the bill to committee.

In committee, stakeholders will present their views and committee members will have an opportunity to move amendments to the bills. At the same time, the House can move to substantive debate on other matters.

There are a number of important pieces of legislation that have already been introduced which the government would like to debate in the House and move to the legislative process; for instance, Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act; Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act; Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act; Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act; and Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

We'd like to spend time to debate some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we cannot do so until Bill 57 is dealt with. I urge all members of this House to support this motion and help pass this bill as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's my pleasure to rise today and have an opportunity to speak to Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. As you know, Speaker, our caucus has long advocated for PRPPs. In fact, as the member for St. Catharines mentioned earlier, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2013, was introduced in this Legislature by our own member from York-Simcoe, Julia Munro, who is here today.

We, as a caucus, strongly believe that Ontarians deserve the right to choose how they save for retirement. It's no secret that we would like to see this bill go forward, and we're very proud that the member for St. Catharines supported the federal government and Prime Minister Stephen Harper by putting this bill forward.

However, I need to take a moment to highlight my concern over the way in which the government has decided to move this bill forward through the motion that the member for St. Catharines just tabled, a time allocation of this bill.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Why do they always time-allocate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't know. I think the government's willingness to fast-track bill after bill through this House without meaningful debate is perturbing.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I haven't spoken to it yet.

Mr. Steve Clark: And that's a good point. My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke makes a very good point: On several occasions this session, I've had over half of the members in my caucus eager to speak to legislation, to voice the real concerns of their constituents in hope that the government would listen. But time after

time after time, this government has forced closure on bills without adequate debate.

For example, Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act: I had 16 members who were here and willing to speak to that bill.

Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act: I had 14 members of my caucus who were willing to speak to that bill, a very important bill on agriculture.

Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act: I had 18 members who were willing and eager to speak to that bill.

Finally, Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act: I had 16 members who wanted to speak to that bill prior to the government choking off debate. I'm going to get to that term "choking off debate" in a few moments.

It's extremely difficult to stand in this House during question period and hear the Deputy Premier repeatedly say, "The easy part of being in opposition is that you get to oppose. The harder part of being in opposition—and it's a big responsibility—is to propose better ideas." Or, "The easy part of being in opposition is that you get to oppose. But the part where you have a real responsibility is to actually provide constructive advice." That is her quote.

I want to assure you, Speaker, that the Ontario PC caucus has tried, and they will continue to try, to put forward constructive debate and amendments to improve legislation that passes through this House. That becomes extremely difficult when the government continues to present time allocation motions and shut down debate at every turn.

It appears as though my colleagues on the opposite side have forgotten an essential element of the democratic process. I would like to give them a reminder of our invaluable democratic rights, the rights that wars have been fought over to establish and protect. I believe it was best described by the esteemed member for St. Catharines on December 11, 2001. Here is Mr. Bradley's quote: "We are operating in this Legislative Assembly at this time almost exclusively on what are called time allocation motions. That's most unfortunate, because it's what you would call anti-democratic.... [T]his government has consistently used these motions to pass legislation through this House even after this government imposed upon the Legislature drastic changes to the procedural rules of this House to grease the skids for legislation that it deems appropriate for the province.

"The best way to deal with legislation is to have the government sitting most of the year so that it can receive careful analysis and debate in this House and in committees and, in fact, in committees that travel across the province to get meaningful input. We do not have that."

The member for St. Catharines—

Mr. John Yakabuski: He sure changed his tune.

Mr. Steve Clark: He sure has changed his tune.

The member for St. Catharines was absolutely right. It is anti-democratic to speed legislation through this House without adequate debate from all parties. It's not fair to silence the voice of individuals who have reached out to

their MPPs with concerns on particular bills, in hope that they'd be able to bring their concerns right here to this House and to have thoughtful debate around ways to improve legislation.

I want to go back, Speaker, in the little bit of time I'm going to take, to quote from another speech from Jim Bradley, the member for St. Catharines, this time from May 30, 2001: "I regret that we are dealing once again with yet another time allocation motion, which is a motion that chokes off debate in the Legislative Assembly. It is my observation after a number of years, and I think talking to people who have observed this Parliament for a number of years, that it has been diminished so remarkably by this government that it has become almost irrelevant."

I'll go through to later on in his speech: "[O]n all sides I think members have something to contribute: the opposition to concede when the government has made moves that are acceptable and good, and the government members to find problems that might exist in government legislation. But that is virtually gone. It is virtually dictated now by the Premier's office. The speeches we hear in the House tend to be speeches which seem to originate from the government caucus service bureau, and I understand the need for some research for speeches, but they are virtually meaningless, because they can't influence the government or the procedures that take place. That's most unfortunate."

Those quotes were from the member for St. Catharines, from 2001.

I can agree with this speech from that member—not the speech he gave this morning. Frankly, I'm surprised that the member is willing to be a party to, and to be involved in, such behaviour and such disrespect for the principles of democracy he wholeheartedly defended that day.

I'm just going to use one final quote from the member for St. Catharines, this time from November 24, 1993. He says, "I wish to speak to the closure motion which is before the House by once again indicating my concern at the number of closure motions which have been forthcoming from the government House leader and under the NDP government of Bob Rae....

"I can well recall that he felt very strongly about the fact that the opposition should have the opportunity to fully canvass all the arguments on any of the bills before the House, and he was a very strong defender of that particular opportunity....

"I'm concerned about the closure motions because I think they limit legitimate debate. I recognize that a government ultimately might have the opportunity to close down a debate that's been going on a very long period of time. But as I've indicated to the House in days gone by, the purpose of these debates is to canvass public opinion, to make the public aware of what is happening."

The member for St. Catharines expressed many truly excellent ideas by his remarks that day about respecting and valuing the role of individual members. I know the member was sincere when he made that speech 22 years ago, and I believe he feels the same way today.

So again, I appeal to the member for St. Catharines and all the MPPs on the government benches to consider carefully the path you're treading. When you are elected into government, you not only are given power, but you're also given the trust of the people. Don't silence the voices, even though they're opposition voices, by shutting down debate and forcing time allocation.

Our party will be voting against this time allocation motion, Speaker.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Before I begin, I want to say that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Windsor-Tecumseh and also the member for Nickel Belt.

I was really looking forward to participating in the debate this morning on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, because I have something to say on behalf of the people I represent in London West. I can't express enough how disappointed I am that the context for me to be offering the perspective of my constituents in London West is around a closure motion to shut down debate on Bill 57, the PRPP act.

This is an issue that is vitally important to the people I represent in London West, to the people that all members of the NDP caucus represent, and many of us have not had an opportunity to yet participate in this debate. We have an obligation to bring forward the concerns of our constituents and to make sure that the fundamental issues of retirement security are addressed appropriately by this Legislature, and that there is an opportunity for all of us to offer the perspectives of the people that we represent and to bring forward some concerns and issues with the legislation. So I'm going to offer the comments that I had prepared on Bill 57, because I want to be on the record about this legislation and about the impact of this bill on my constituents in London West.

I just wanted to share with you a shocking statistic that was reported in the 2014 VitalSigns report by the London Community Foundation: a 300% increase in the poverty rate among seniors in London. That's based on the most recent data from Stats Canada.

Ensuring that seniors can retire with dignity and are not forced to live in poverty is absolutely critical to me and to the people I represent in London West. Of course, there is no issue nearer and dearer to the hearts of New Democrats than pension reform and improving retirement security for Ontarians and, indeed, all Canadians. It's one of the bedrock principles that has long identified our party and that New Democrats have fought for, for decades, at both the federal and the provincial levels.

Sadly, Bill 57 does nothing to address the real crisis in retirement security faced by Ontarians, which is one of the reasons that New Democrats are so concerned about this closure motion and why we believe that debate should continue on this legislation.

We have to stop for a moment and reflect. The inspiration behind this legislation, the impetus for the creation of pooled registered pension plans, or PRPPs, is none

other than Stephen Harper. This alone should make people think carefully about the real purpose of this bill, who it is actually designed to help, and who will benefit from this legislation. Certainly, it's not low-income seniors. It's not those increasing numbers of seniors who are living in poverty in London and across this province, who are having difficulty making ends meet. These are not the people who will benefit from this legislation.

Bill 57 is modelled after the federal pooled registered pension plan legislation that came into force in 2012. That was based on proposals that were brought forward by the life insurance industry. Bill 57 includes some adaptations for the Ontario context.

The passage of that federal legislation came after four years of determined advocacy by labour groups and by seniors' groups. It also followed seven federal-provincial finance ministers' meetings. These meetings drove home the reality that Canadians were not saving nearly enough for their retirement, and in fact, almost one-third of Canadians do not have any retirement savings at all. They simply have not been able to put money aside.

The meetings also highlighted the need for a safe, affordable and reliable retirement savings vehicle for the two thirds of working Canadians without workplace pensions. We know that such a vehicle already exists. It's called the Canada Pension Plan. We really need to be looking at enhancing the CPP rather than offering these new types of private sector retirement savings options.

As a result of these four years of advocacy, as a result of the seven meetings that were held, a two-pronged strategy was developed. It included the federal PRPP legislation, but it also included a commitment from the federal and provincial governments to look at a modest enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan act to complement the private sector PRPPs and improve retirement security of Canadians.

But of course, it did not take long for the Harper government to backtrack on that commitment. Shortly after the introduction of the federal PRPPs, Stephen Harper made clear that his government was not going to proceed with any enhancement to the CPP. His solution—his only solution—to ensuring retirement security for Canadians was the federal PRPP legislation.

Since only 15% of workers are federally regulated, and most already have workplace pensions, the private sector organizations that had supported the federal PRPP legislation in the first place began to lobby strongly for Ontario PRPP legislation, because they saw that as a great potential market opportunity. These private sector organizations included the life insurance industry, the banks, the CFIB, the Canadian Chamber Of Commerce and others.

In responding to this lobbying campaign, it has been very interesting to watch the evolution of the thinking of the Ontario Liberal government. For years, Ontario Liberals had stood with the New Democrats and supported CPP enhancement as the best and only option. But with the push for PRPPs, the Liberals announced that they would proceed with provincial PRPP legislation, but only

if it was accompanied by a federal-provincial agreement to enhance the CPP. After Stephen Harper rejected enhancing the CPP, the Wynne government nevertheless decided that it would proceed unilaterally with PRPPs in the absence of that CPP enhancement.

What Bill 57 does is allow for the establishment and administration of pooled registered pension plans in Ontario, so it's the Ontario version of the federal legislation, with a few differences.

Bill 57 recognizes the impact of family law on PRPPs and includes provisions dealing with the treatment of spouses, and options following marriage breakdown. This is similar to the treatment of spouses and former spouses under the Pension Benefits Act.

Also consistent with the Pension Benefits Act, Bill 57 protects funds that are in a PRPP account from creditors. It gives the Ontario Superintendent of Financial Services regulatory authority over PRPPs and establishes a process for a PRPP administrator to object to or appeal decisions of the superintendent.

Finally, there are also amendments included in Bill 57 to various other pieces of legislation, specifically adding PRPPs to the definition of a pension plan. Bill 57 also identifies PRPPs as one of the permitted vehicles to which pension plan assets can be transferred by former plan members or eligible spouses, which means that, of course, registered pension plan administrators will have to review whether the terms of their existing plans permit transfers to PRPPs, and they may have to look at amending their plans to enable this option.

The purpose of pooled registered pension plans is to pool risks of companies. In that way, very large pooled funds are created and, in theory, the argument goes, this will keep fees low. But we have a major concern about this theory, based on past history.

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First, PRPPs give managers, who are employees of the banks and the insurance companies, basically a monopoly to offer these kinds of retirement savings options. We know from experience that RRSPs and other private sector retirement savings options include hefty private sector management fees. The higher the management fees, the lower the returns to the beneficiary.

Currently, Canadians pay twice as much, or even more, for administration of their RRSPs than do those Canadians who are enrolled in large public pension funds. The CPP investment board, like OMERS and other large provincial public sector workplace pension plans, has been able to keep administration costs very, very low, at less than 1%. This is a major contrast to the private sector experience with RRSPs, and it really makes public sector pensions, like the CPP or OMERS or other plans, a much better sponsor for a retirement savings vehicle than the insurance industry or the banks, which charge 2% or more for RRSPs, which is double the management costs for CPP.

But there are other equally concerning problems with PRPPs. There are no employer obligations to contribute to a PRPP, and just like RRSPs, benefits are based only on what an individual worker can contribute.

Employee participation is strictly voluntary. There's no mandatory enrolment such as we see in other provinces, like Quebec. There's no defined benefit. Workers end up with whatever the market returns are at the date that they decide to retire. So just like an RRSP, employees who are thinking about retiring with a PRPP, if they're thinking about it at a time that the market goes down, may realize that they actually can't afford to retire and will be forced to stay in the workplace.

So the question is, why? Why did the government decide to bring in another private sector retirement option? When you look at the experience with RRSPs, the model that many of us contribute to, it's really hard to make the case that another option was needed.

Canadians are contributing about \$40 billion a year to their RRSPs, and there has been an increase in total RRSP contributions over the last couple of years. But the number of people who are contributing has been virtually unchanged. In addition, there is an estimated \$80 billion in unused RRSP contribution room. As one analyst put it, the RRSP savings pool is getting deeper but not wider. We see the same number of people contributing, and they are contributing more, because these are people who have the means to invest in a private sector pension plan.

More concerning, these savings plans are concentrated in a very small percentage of families, as I just mentioned. According to Stats Canada, 25% of families hold 84% of RRSP assets, and three out of 10 families have no private pensions at all.

RRSPs and other tax-free savings accounts and other private sector options do play an important role for many Ontarians, but they only work for those who have the ability to contribute.

We cannot build a fair and equitable system of retirement security around private sector savings vehicles. When people are living in poverty and barely getting by, buying an RRSP or a PRPP is simply not possible. This is especially the case in my community and, I'm sure, in other ridings across Canada or across Ontario, because of the level of need in the community. The VitalSigns report that I mentioned earlier showed that London's poverty rate has increased over 6% since 2000. We now have a poverty rate that is almost 32% higher than the national average. Londoners absolutely need a publicly funded system that will support them in savings for retirement. They do not need another private sector option.

Before I close, I wanted to talk a little bit about the impact of PRPPs on women. I am the women's issues critic for the Ontario NDP caucus, and I think that it's important that we apply a gender lens to the issues that we discuss in this Legislature.

We're all aware that Ontario's population is aging, but we may be less aware that Ontario's seniors are predominantly female. Women live longer than men. They make up a larger proportion of people over 65, and they make up the overwhelming majority of people who are in the oldest age groups.

At the same time, senior women are almost twice as likely to live in poverty as men, especially if they are

single. Almost one third of elderly women who are on their own live below the poverty line. They are much more likely than men to have to rely on income security programs, like OAS and GIS. In 2008, only 28.6% of senior women's total income was made up of pension and retirement income, compared to 36.6% of senior men's income. We know that immigrant women are particularly vulnerable. Many immigrant women over the age of 65 who have lived in Canada for 10 years or less are without any income at all.

In 2013, the OECD did a study on global pensions and found that rising poverty among Canadian seniors is most acute among elderly women, especially those who are divorced or separated. These higher rates of poverty among senior women reflect the reality of the persistent and widening wage gap, which was a finding of the OECD.

Next week, we will be marking pay equity day here in Ontario, which marks how much longer women have to earn into the next year in order to generate the same level of earnings that men had the year before. This year, women have to have worked all of January, all of February, all of March and three weeks into April before they have earned the same salary that a man earned the previous year.

We know that women also make up the majority of minimum wage earners in Ontario; almost 60% of minimum wage earners are women. They are more likely to have part-time, contract or temporary jobs and other forms of precarious employment, which, as we know, do not come with workplace pensions. They do not come with earnings that enable women to put money into RRSPs or PRPPs or other private sector retirement savings vehicles.

We know that women still shoulder most of the responsibility for caregiving. They have to juggle work and family responsibilities, and often move in and out of the labour force, which has long-term consequences for their income security when they retire, because they may have had to stop their CPP contributions, which of course will reduce their future benefits.

These factors mean, as I mentioned, that women are unlikely to have the advantage of workplace pensions. They are unlikely to have the means to be able to save for retirement. These factors are compounded by women's longer life expectancy, which in effect means that they have to save more than a man would, to be able to retire with dignity and security, because they are living longer.

So what we are seeing in Ontario is that instead of retiring, Ontario women are continuing to work. There was a recent report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives that found that the number of women who stayed in the workforce after age 65 doubled between 2007 and 2013.

We are also seeing that more than half of working women aged 65 to 69 are now working full-time. These are women who should be able to retire, who should be able to look forward to living their final years with dignity, enjoying their grandchildren, but they are now hav-

ing to stay in the workforce. At no time in the last decade have so many women aged 65 or older been in the labour market.

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The problem with PRPPs is that they do not take any of these issues into account. They do not take into account the number of women who are employed in precarious jobs, the number of women who work at minimum wage jobs, or the number of women who do not work in paid employment at all because of family caregiving commitments, because of disability or other factors.

The PRPP is a classic example of a policy initiative that does not include a gender lens. Despite the government's stated commitment to gender-based analysis, by bringing forward this policy they are discounting and excluding the experience of women.

I'm going to now turn over to my colleague the member for Windsor-Tecumseh to offer some additional comments on the closure motion and on Bill 57.

Certainly, New Democrats will be voting against the closure motion. We will be continuing to push for enhanced CPP on behalf of the Ontarians who do not have workplace pension plans and we will be holding the Liberals to account to ensure that any public pension option includes mandatory employer contributions, automatic enrolment, low administration fees and defined benefits.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's tough to follow my colleague from London West because she always puts so much passion into her very well-researched speech on Bill 57.

Once again I am honoured to be able to stand in this chamber and be the voice of the people in Windsor-Tecumseh. Today, we're discussing time allocation on government Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2015. Let us not confuse this proposed legislation with Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

Though I must say, Speaker, there are those who—I'm sure—like this confusion that is out there, this bit of smoke and mirrors over these two bills, and perhaps that confusion has led the government to bring in time allocation.

My constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh are good, solid, hard-working people and retirees who understand the value of a good, reliable pension plan. They may not understand why the government doesn't want us to keep talking about pensions in this House, or why the government wants to restrict the time that we're allowed to do so, but they do accept the fact that in Ontario—indeed, in Canada—we should all be able to retire with dignity.

Our senior years, the days we spend in retirement, were once called our "golden years." I'm not convinced that's the case anymore, unless, of course, you happen to work at the top of the heap at one of our banking institutions.

I was on the train home back to Windsor-Tecumseh on Thursday, the day before Good Friday. By chance, I

happened to pick up a copy of the *Globe and Mail*. I took all the time in the world to read it, unlike today where we're having time allocation on Bill 57. The *Globe*, as you know, Speaker, is not a bad paper. I'm sure you've heard of it. Tucked away in the *Globe's* Report on Business section, I stumbled across an article with the headline that read "CIBC's CEO Retirement Pay Surprises Many." Who in this House wouldn't read on after having that headline in front of you?

The opening paragraph grabbed me right away, and here's why: "The outsized compensation packages Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce promised to pay two retired executives has corporate governance specialists scratching their heads—and has even rankled some Bay Street professionals." Who in this chamber wouldn't want to keep reading once you've been intrigued with that? I had to keep going.

In the interest of full disclosure, Speaker, I'm not a banker. I've never worked in a bank. Sometimes I do my banking at ATMs. That's because, like Stephen Leacock, every time I go into a bank I get rattled. The tellers rattle me; the wickets rattle me; the sight of money rattles me; everything rattles me.

A reporter for the *Globe and Mail*, Tim Kiladze—I don't say I pronounce his name properly. I'll spell it: Tim K-I-L-A-D-Z-E. Obviously, Tim doesn't get rattled around banks and bankers. Well, he might, if he only had so much time given to do his banking, like we have only so much time today to talk about Bill 57, because of time allocation.

Tim was poring over the CIBC's proxy circular. I know none of us are ever going to do that. I'm not; that's for sure. But Tim discovers the small print that discloses that the CIBC is continuing to pay Gerry McCaughey, its former CEO, and Richard Nesbitt, its former chief operating officer, very well after they retired from the bank last fall.

Speaker, you and I may disagree on what being paid handsomely means, just as we may disagree on time allocation. So let me try not to get too rattled when I tell you this, but the CIBC will lay out \$25 million to their former senior executives. They do have to split it, of course, just like we're splitting our time on time allocation today. While the rest of us in the non-banking sectors would struggle to pay the hydro bills and put food on the table, and try to maybe squeeze in a short holiday somewhere warm in the colder months, the CIBC is continuing to pay the base salaries, perks and bonuses for many more months to come.

The *Globe and Mail* found this information tucked away. I mean, who would want to go around to the bank's customers and tell them straight up front what their fees and commissions are paying for, right? By next April, Mr. McCaughey will be handed an additional \$16.7 million, and Mr. Nesbitt will be paid \$8.5 million by this October. It's nice work if you can get it, Speaker.

The article also quotes a York University professor, Richard Leblanc, who is also an adviser on corporate governance. I guess I'm surprised that they're time-

allocating this, but Professor Leblanc was surprised by these CIBC terms. In fact, he's quoted as saying, "This can raise outrage.... It sends the wrong signal to the rank and file"—no kidding—just as time allocation sends the wrong signal to the people in this province that the government wants to limit debate on the controversial bill.

These two guys who are getting all this extra money are not on the payroll as advisers. They've retired. Like Elvis, they've left the building. They're gone. They're not doing anything else for the bank these days. Yet somehow, for some reason, your bank fees, Speaker, your interest, your investments are being used in this sweetheart deal to keep paying these two fine gentlemen.

I guess there is actually a law that makes it legal, just as I'm sure the government has a law that allows them to bring in time allocation when they want to silence the voices of the opposition. You see, since both men had earlier given notice that, a couple of years down the road, they wanted to retire, this allowed the board to say, "Well, if you go now, we can give you all this extra money." Nice work if you can get it. So they're kept on the payroll. Some laws are fashioned for a very few, and the rest of us have to deal with everything else that's left over.

According to Jane Milburn, a labour lawyer who specializes in Bay Street clients, not everyone has to do exactly what the CIBC says, just like nobody really has to time-allocate a bill unless they're trying to silence the opposition. You see, if you put on the books that—apparently, you can put in a policy or a contract that says, "If you resign, we have a policy for that. It doesn't mean we've got to pay you two years' salary for going." I mean, who knew?

Speaker, I repeat, this was all published in the *Globe and Mail* on April 2. On that same day in the same newspaper, there was another article, with the headline "New Pension Reality Hits Banks' Corner Offices," this one written by David Milstead. It appears the banks have learned their lesson. At the Bank of Nova Scotia, Richard Waugh retired in late 2013. His pension will hit the max at \$2 million a year. The man who replaced him, Brian Porter, won't be able to get more than \$1.5 million in annual pension, and that's only if he serves 10 years in the top spot.

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Over at the Royal Bank of Canada, Mr. Milstead tells us that last July, at the age of 57, Gordon Nixon was pensioned off at \$1.75 million a year. Speaker, you're in the wrong business. You should have been at the top of one of these banks. If he had stayed on until he was 60, he would have qualified for a pension of \$2 million a year.

Here we are talking about pooled pension plans.

RBC's new CEO, a gentleman by the name of David McKay, is not so lucky. If he stays until he turns 60, he can qualify for an annual pension of \$1.25 million a year, but if he opts out at age 55 in October three years from now, he'll still get \$700,000 a year.

Mr. Michael Mantha: That's it?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's it.

Bill Downe, D-O-W-N-E, at the Bank of Montreal, has hit his cap of \$1 million a year, but somebody was thinking ahead. He gets his \$1 million a year in American funds—Canadian banker; American funds. I suspect someone on the government side was thinking ahead on this, too, when they brought in time allocation on Bill 57.

Let's turn to my bank, Toronto-Dominion, TD Canada Trust. Here's a name we've all heard in this House for the last days and weeks and months, and making big news this morning: Ed Clark, with Mr. Clark, who is making decisions on so many issues affecting all of us, each and every one of us here in Ontario these days, making a big announcement this morning. According to the Globe and Mail, Ed Clark retired last October with an annual pension of \$2.5 million a year. Here's a guy out there now making decisions that affect us all, those of us struggling on the old age pension and the Canada Pension Plan: \$2.5 million a year for Mr. Clark—a nice chunk of change. I know a few retirees who would love to live just on the interest on \$2.5 million. I'm one of them, Speaker, and I'm sure you are as well.

Good for Mr. Clark, I say. I've never met the man. I'm sure he's a fine gentleman. Perhaps I'll never meet him. I hear he's a very generous man. Well, I guess he can afford to be.

Now, this isn't meant in any way as a slight to Ed Clark, or any of the other bankers raking in the big bucks in their golden years. I just think it would be nice to share more of that gold with the people who made it possible: the customers of Canada's banks. We all do our banking at our Canadian banks and trust companies, credit unions. The clients of these banks, those of us who take out the loans or get cash out of the ATM—by the way, after Ed Clark retired with his pension of just under \$2.5 million a year, the man who replaced him, Bharat Masrani, had his pre-CEO pension frozen and will accrue \$110,000 towards his CEO pension each year he remains in the top job until he hits the max at \$1.35 million a year.

Back to Mr. McCaughey for a moment. According to the Globe and Mail, he spent 10 years at the top of the CIBC, but because he worked for a number of years at other CIBC-related investment banking companies, the board, in the board's wisdom, gave him nearly 22 years of extra service credit—21.9, actually, Speaker.

Back to Ed Clark for a moment. He was entitled to a full pension when he turned 62. He decided to stay on a little bit longer, so when he stayed on past that date, TD gave him a stock option award with a value of \$4.7 million in an agreement to cap his pension payouts.

Well, I know we're working on time allocation, but the little guy seems to be getting lost in this debate. In case you're wondering, unlike Bill Downe at the Bank of Montreal, Mr. Clark's \$4.7 million is in Canadian funds, not in American.

I thank the Globe and Mail for making all of this information public. I believe everyone in Ontario should be aware of how well our banking institutions treat their

senior executives. Maybe this information will be used by some of our constituents as they consider their career options—it's a good job if you can get to the top in the banking industry—or, indeed, their banking choices.

Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2015: The sad, sad fact of life, Speaker, as you well know, is that two thirds of us in Ontario do not currently have a workplace pension plan. That wouldn't be so troublesome if our personal savings were such that we could rely on them to top us up, but who are we kidding? We're not bankers. We're not senior corporate executives. Our pension planning comes on Wednesday and Saturday, when we buy a 6/49 ticket, or a Lotto Max on Fridays. For many of us, that's our pension plan, or that's what we're hoping to get out of it.

We hold out hope to make it eligible for the Canada Pension Plan, the CPP, but even so, that maxes out currently at, what, \$12,500 a year? That's the top of the scale. Many of our constituents will only get the average of \$6,800. Believe me, no one's going to time-allocate their views on that.

Speaker, I want to skip ahead a bit because I know that the member from Nickel Belt, who is going to use up some of the last of our time, wants to jump in and make some notes. Let me just go ahead for a moment, if I can.

Mr. Michael Mantha: That's the problem when you silence debate.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, that's the thing: You want to keep talking and you can't, right?

This PRPP—and I stress the "PP," because this plan will trickle huge amounts of money into the coffers of the big banks and the insurance companies like that one. We know they need as much as they can get to pay for those wonderful, generous pension plans for their senior executives. It will also allow employers to get away without making contributions.

PRPPs are a commodity, a product, a revenue tool for banks and insurance companies, where administrative fees are charged instead of benefiting retirees the way they should.

Speaker, at that, I thank you for your time this morning. I say to anyone who's listening, thinking about what kind of career they're going to get into in Ontario: Get into the banking industry. Work hard; get to the top. You won't have to worry about pooled registered pension plans.

With that, I'll turn the rest of our time over to the wonderful member from Nickel Belt.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Last call for further debate. The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't want to rise right away because I didn't know if any of my colleagues from the Liberals or the PCs were going to stand up. I will use my two minutes wisely.

Basically, Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, doesn't do a whole lot of things that don't already exist. Any one of us in Ontario who has money can contribute to a bank RRSP. The lucky ones of us who

have a little bit of money at the end of the month, we do that. But for a lot of people, it's not a question.

What you have to realize here is that what the government is doing is actually giving the banks and the insurance companies that will hold those pension plans the right to deduct money from your cheque, whether you want to or not.

Right now, in order for them to deduct money from your cheque, you have to consent. But if you work for an employer who decides that one of those pooled registered pension plans is just the ticket he needs—they won't have to contribute to it. They won't have to do anything. The bank will do everything for them. Then, if your employer does this, you have lost the right to hold onto your cheque.

If we pass this bill and your employer signs a deal with a bank or an insurance company—and the member from Tecumseh certainly made it clear as to how much money those people have—if we pass Bill 57, then they will have the right to take money off your cheque.

The NDP does not think that this is something that Ontario needs. What Ontario needs is security in retirement, not giving the bank and the insurance company access to your paycheck, no matter how small it is, so that they can pay themselves millions of dollars.

We think that this is wrong. We disagree with what this bill does, but we agree we need to do better to make sure that people live their final years in retirement in financial security.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this morning to speak to second reading of Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin, the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015. I found out precisely 30 minutes ago that I would

be given this opportunity, so I'm really excited about the chance to speak. It says something about how the House is developing its plan as it goes; it's a very exciting that we're here this morning to discuss this important issue.

I think it's important to put this legislation in some sort of fiscal context because, as we know, the Ontario budget is going to be tabled in this House on April 23. It's quite late, Mr. Speaker. Normally, in recent years, the budget has been tabled around the end of the fiscal year, sometimes before the fiscal year concludes, towards the end of March; and now we're into the month of April. But at least we finally do know the day that the budget will be presented: April 23.

The economic numbers that I'm using are the ones that the government presented in the fall economic outlook and fiscal review, which was tabled in the House towards the end of the year. We know that in that important document which the government presented to the House last fall, the government was projecting a \$12.5-billion deficit for the fiscal year 2014-15. That is the fiscal year that ended at the end of March, just a few weeks ago.

It's also important to point out that the government has informed us that they have revised the deficit number for that fiscal year that's just finished. They now anticipate a deficit of \$10.9 billion—somewhat less than they presented in the House. Again, that makes us question where this original number came from and what changed in the interval. Was it a case of the government over-estimating the deficit so that it could come into this House and then crow about having done something positive by reducing that deficit number—if in fact that deficit was artificially inflated when it was presented in the House in the fall?

But it's also important to point out that the deficit in the previous year was \$12.5 billion. The government would have us believe that they are, in fact, reducing the deficit each year such that they can balance the budget by 2017-18. The reality is that even if the deficit number for the fiscal year just finished comes in at \$10.9 billion, as they've said recently, it's still an increase, year over year, in the deficit of some \$400 million. If they're going to balance the budget by 2017-18, as they lead us to believe, as they repeatedly say, you would think and assume—and most people would agree—that the deficit should be coming down year over year such that it comes down to zero by 2017-18. In fact, as I said, we see the deficit actually increasing.

The fall economic statement projected a net provincial debt leading up to the end of the fiscal year, the end of March, of \$287.3 billion. I think it's important to point out that the debt was actually \$139 billion in 2003, which is of course the year of the provincial election when the Liberal government took power. The deficit has doubled during that time—sorry, the debt, rather; the provincial debt, the net debt, has doubled since the Liberals took office.

The provincial government spending that was projected in the fall economic statement: \$130.2 billion, up from \$126.4 billion last year. The net debt per capita—

Mr. Joe Dickson: Point of order: Just to remind the member to speak to the bill. It's Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act. We're all over the world, but let's deal with the real issue at hand: the Great Lakes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm listening to the member carefully, and I would ask him to come around to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I appreciate your ruling, Mr. Speaker. You're absolutely correct. It is important that members speak to the bill, and I feel I am speaking to the bill because I'm talking about the fiscal context in which this bill has been introduced.

I'll just finish up here. The net debt per capita in the province of Ontario from the fall economic statement: \$21,003, up from \$11,339 in 2003—almost a doubling of the net debt per capita. In effect, the amount of each of us in Ontario owes because of years of provincial government overspending has almost doubled since this government took power. It's the amount that each Ontarian owes—every man, woman and child—because of years of government overspending.

The interest payments on the debt: \$10.8 billion. This is the third-largest item in the budget after health and education, and, again, expected to increase about \$1 billion a year for the foreseeable future. By 2017-18, the government's own documents suggest and project an almost \$14-billion annual interest payment because of the growing—and exploding, really—provincial debt.

Again, I put these numbers on the table in the context of this debate because, with the fiscal profligacy of this this government, I think it's important to remind Ontarians, and the House, in fact, that we are facing a severe financial problem in this province of Ontario because of overspending on the part of the Liberal government. All of the legislation that is debated and discussed in this House has to be put in some sort of context. The financial problem that we face is growing more severe by the day as we borrow more and more every day, every hour of every day, because of this government's unwillingness to show fiscal restraint.

Bill 66: As we know, Mr. Speaker, the stated purpose of this bill is “to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and....

“to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.”

The bill, if passed, would create a guardian council, as the government calls it in the bill, and the minister would, “as he or she considers advisable,” extend invitations to individuals from a variety of stakeholder groups to participate in this council. The council would be required to meet within one year of the act coming into effect and at least one meeting in every subsequent calendar year. So this guardian council would be expected to meet annually if this bill were to pass.

The council would be established to provide advice but not be a decision-making body. The stated purpose of the council would be to provide a forum to identify prior-

ities for actions, potential funding measures and partnerships, and facilitate information sharing. The minister would ultimately be the one who would decide on initiatives—I assume in consultation with cabinet.

The legislation would not call for the presence of specific groups as mandatory at meetings; nor would it require balanced representation from the hundreds of communities attached to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

The bill would require the government to maintain Ontario's current Great Lakes Strategy and require the strategy to be reviewed by the end of 2018, which is just a few years away, and at least every six years afterwards. The minister, in consultation with the other Great Lakes ministers, would table progress reports to the assembly every three years.

After consulting with the other Great Lakes ministers, the minister would, if empowered by Bill 66, “establish qualitative or quantitative targets relating to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin” that would have the power to overriding existing legislation—for example, the Nutrient Management Act that was passed by this Legislature some years ago.

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Within two years, the minister would “establish at least one target ... to assist in the reduction of algae blooms in all or part of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin....

“The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry may, after consulting with the other Great Lakes ministers, establish one or more qualitative or quantitative target in respect to preventing the net loss of wetlands in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.”

Of course, if we look at the issue of geographically focused initiatives, any member of the public would be able to submit geographically focused initiatives, or GFI's as they're called, to be considered by the council and approved by the minister, essentially making the council, we say, perhaps a pointless layer of red tape that could be avoided through direct ministry submission.

The act would undoubtedly lead to greater loss of municipal autonomy; I think that's clear. According to the bill, despite any other act and initiative, a GFI, a geographically focused initiative, would prevail “in the case of conflict between a designated policy set out in the initiative and,

“(a) an official plan;

“(b) a zoning bylaw; or

“(c) ... a policy statement issued under section 3 of the Planning Act.”

If there is a conflict with existing legislation, “the provision that provides the greatest protection to the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin prevails.”

Our caucus critic on the environment file is Lisa Thompson. She is the member for Huron-Bruce. She's doing an outstanding job of responding to the government's policy with respect to the environment. We are

engaged in our role as opposition, pointing out the flaws and drawbacks of the government's legislation.

In recent days, of course, the government has committed to a new cap-and-trade policy that they say is an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province of Ontario. They've signed an agreement with the province of Quebec and the state of California to enter into this cap-and-trade scheme.

We've asked a lot of questions about this issue in the Legislature. This is an important environmental issue, Mr. Speaker, so I think it's important to discuss it in the context of this Bill 66 debate. We have said that the real motive behind cap-and-trade is actually to disguise a massive revenue increase, in the order of \$1 billion to \$2 billion, and that it in fact is a tax by another name.

We see that there are many valid questions about cap-and-trade and we really have not had an answer to the most basic and fundamental question: How much will it cost the average Ontarian and how can we get assurance of where the money will go? I've asked the rhetorical question through Twitter: "Will the Premier issue a public challenge to all Ontarians to reduce their carbon footprint, before she gets on a jet to California?" I would anticipate and expect that there will be cabinet ministers jetting off to California to monitor the progress of this initiative. I think it's important to ask that question as well.

The government's stated commitment is that the money, whatever money is generated as a result of cap-and-trade, will go towards, I believe, transit initiatives or other initiatives with respect to the environment. I would ask if in fact the money is going to be set into a dedicated fund in that regard or if it's just going to be funnelled into the Consolidated Revenue Fund. As we've seen in the past with the government's health tax—they call it the health premium—that they introduced in their first budget after coming to power in 2003-04, we were told that the health premium would be going towards health care. What we found out later, of course, was that in fact the money generated from the health premium was just going into the Consolidated Revenue fund and that it was a brand new provincial income tax; it was not even a health premium. So the government has the record of a shell game with respect to the health premium, which is really, as I say, a brand new provincial income tax. We would question, again, whether or not they're being sincere with this commitment.

I would also ask: Why is it that the Premier's first instinct when it comes to working with business is to be hostile and punitive? Why isn't she prepared to work with our job creators to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

I would also suggest that we see across the world, where cap-and-trade has been introduced and has been established, that there is not a single jurisdiction where the process isn't being gamed by the participants.

Lastly, I would ask again that the government table an independent economic analysis of cap-and-trade in the Legislature so that we know what the pros and cons are

and how many jobs are in fact going to be exported as a result of this policy.

Getting back to Bill 66, Mr. Speaker, our position as a caucus is this: The role and purpose of the guardian council remains largely unclear. We ask: What are the benefits of creating this council that cannot be achieved through other legislative tools and public consultation processes?

We say that, as it stands, the proposed guardian council will become a tool by which the government can appease its Liberal friends, and the minister is only mandated to invite those stakeholders "that he or she considers advisable." This limits the—thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You may know that the Premier and her cabinet have organized two lock-ups, followed by a press conference this morning, that were organized in such a way as to conflict with question period. They are announcing this morning what will more than likely be the single biggest policy initiative to be carried out by this government in the 41st Parliament: the sell-off of Hydro One.

They have by design organized this in such a way that one must conclude that the only reason they are doing so is to manipulate control of the message of this policy initiative. They are attempting to game the timing of their announcement in such a way that it avoids the immediate scrutiny of question period.

I'll be very brief. O'Brien and Bosc says question period "is this part of the parliamentary day where the government is held accountable for its administrative policies and the conduct of its ministers, both individually and collectively." I would add to this that the government has been clear that this announcement will form the basis of its budget's fiscal framework for this year.

I say, is this a budget? No. But Speaker Carr's ruling on the Magna budget, on May 8, 2003, had some questions that equally apply to the decision by the Premier to do an end run around this House.

I am not going to quote Speaker Carr at length; I only have two points. Speaker Carr said in his second point, "If left unchallenged, will this incident ... embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?" And I would argue that question period is one of them.

His third point is, "Why is an extraordinary parliamentary process needed if there is already a process in the House? If the answer is that it enables direct communication with the public, to what extent does such an answer undermine the representative, scrutiny and accountability functions of" this House?

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you adjourn question period after introduction of guests so as to allow sufficient time for the Premier and her cabinet colleagues to return to this House so that we, the opposition, on behalf of the public and beholden to our parliamentary responsibility, are able to question the government in regard to what will prove to be the single biggest shift in government policy in the 41st Parliament.

The last point I will say: I also want to inform you, Speaker, that New Democrats believe that this action by Premier Wynne is a breach of our parliamentary privilege, and we will be providing you with arguments to that effect later.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I feel very strongly, as does my colleague beside me, the third party House leader, that this government can't run roughshod over standing orders and the traditions of this place. Question period, in our Westminster system, is the opportunity for the opposition to hold the government to account. This is a long-standing tradition. For the government to make these decisions today on major government announcements and then absent themselves from this Parliament, to me, is unconscionable. I believe you need to rule, and the government needs to realize that this place, for all 107 MPPs, is a place that we cherish. We need to be able to provide that opportunity to hold the government to account.

This is disgraceful, these government benches. I hope you will take Mr. Bisson's point of order seriously. I know members of my party will do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would be remiss if I did not present to you facts in relation to the point of order that was raised by the House leader from the third party.

Speaker, I think the facts are as follows: For some time, the Premier has outlined that she has an advisory council that has been doing some work on asset optimization and that at some point, that advisory council would be tabling its recommendations to the government. Today is such a day; the advisory council is presenting its recommendations. What the Premier is merely doing is responding to those recommendations.

The Premier has been available in this House in a large majority of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I intend to hear the points being made by everyone clearly, and I do not want interruption.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. The Premier has been available in this House question period after question period, answering to questions of the opposition on a myriad of issues, including the issue around the work that the advisory council on asset optimization has been doing. The Premier fully intends to be in the House next question period and beyond to answer questions.

Any government policy that will be deliberated upon will be presented in the formal budget that will take place

on April 23, next Thursday, as announced by the Minister of Finance.

The members of the government's executive council are in the House today to participate fully in question period and answer any questions that the members of the opposition would have in that regard, so I urge you to disallow this point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A continuation of the point of order? The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A continuation, Mr. Speaker, and very briefly: I just say again, the government is in control of the timing. It's clear that they have gamed this in order to be able to not allow the opposition to ask questions. They could have done this any other way that would have allowed that; they did not. I think Speaker Carr's ruling was pretty clear—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I—

Mr. Steve Clark: Disrespect of the House: That's what it is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would appreciate an opportunity—with silence—to respond.

It is understood that no one is compelled to attend and that the government provides information to the opposition of their presence in the House as a courtesy. It is not demanded by protocol. The member from Timmins–James Bay has indicated that there is a concern that it might be a breach of privilege, which is different from a point of order on this particular topic. So I will allow that to happen and anticipate that it will happen.

As far as the point of order is concerned, they are not compelled to attend, and, quite frankly, that's my ruling. It's something that can happen without breaching any orders. So that's it. That's my ruling.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, I understand it's your ruling, but I've also asked you to adjourn this House until such time as the Premier and her cabinet are here to answer questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order in terms of a request of the House, so that's not going to happen.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to introduce Mr. William Stevens. He's the CEO of Mushrooms Canada, and he came in from Guelph this morning.

I would also like to introduce Susan McBride, who's the director of human resources for Highline Produce Ltd., the largest employer in Prince Edward county: the Highline Mushrooms factory.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like welcome page captain Ashton Corr's father, who's here today: Stephen Corr. I'm not sure where he is but I'd like to welcome him. I know he's in the building.

Congratulations to Ashton for being the page captain today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is with great pleasure that I welcome participants and leaders from the Royal Bank of Canada Career Launch Program. I was with them earlier when this program got going early this year. We have Susan Uchida, Rehana Ciriani, Judy Dobbs, Lindsey Hartshorn, Elynn Wareham, Peggy Capitain, Vanda Hudak, Joshua Wittingham, Neelam Sian, Daniel Mayer, Erica Baillie, and Christopher Lee-Hon-Siong.

All are here in the members' gallery. Please join me in welcoming them here to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Dennis Prouse in the members' gallery, from CropLife Canada. Welcome, Dennis.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to introduce Craig Saunders in the gallery from OPSEU. He's here today to observe.

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Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to welcome, from Simcoe Community Services, Marion Graves, the CEO, and Jamie Hall of stakeholder relations.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to introduce Carmela Betel and her friend Lucy Shaar, who came down today to hear the statements on Holocaust Memorial Day and Yad Vashem, as well as to attend the reception which will begin at 11:15 in room 228.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park four constituents from the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West: Robin Pilon, Jacques Pilon, Maddy Pilon and Dan Howell, in the east gallery.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am very pleased to welcome Bridget Girard and her daughter Jacquie, from our lovely riding of Durham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm happy to introduce my father, who is in the members' east gallery, who was 90 years young yesterday—welcome—and my partner, Chris Van der Vyver, the most loyal partner that one could ever hope for.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It's a pleasure to have in the House, from CropLife, Dennis Prouse, vice-president of government affairs, and also a constituent of Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just want to welcome two folks who are former students of mine at York University: Dibya Pal and Vinayak Nagarajan. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jim Wilson: This question is for whoever is Acting Premier today. Hey, lucky man.

Speaker, to the Acting Premier: Section 50.3(1) of the Electricity Act reads: "All proceeds payable to Her Majesty in right of Ontario in respect of the disposition of any securities or debt obligations of, or any other interest in, Hydro One Inc., a corporation established under section 50, a corporation or other entity established under

section 50.1 or an arrangement made under section 50.1 shall be paid to the financial corporation."

Acting Premier, are you going to follow the law? Are you going to pay down the \$27-billion hydro debt with the money you get from the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the leader of the official opposition for the question. First of all, Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we know that Mr. Ed Clark will be tabling his recommendations later today. I think it would not be wise to pre-empt what's in the report.

What's clear, and something that the Premier has been very clear about, Speaker, is that we want to find opportunities to unlock the value in the tremendous assets we have in our province and be able to use that value to fund critical public infrastructure that is needed in the process, such as our highways, our transit and our transportation infrastructure. That's something that we presented to the people of Ontario in the last election, and we continue to work on that to build Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Acting Premier: The reason we put the law into place was to ensure that the money from any sale of Hydro One would be used to pay down the debt and provide relief to hydro customers through lower electricity rates. After all, it's the hydro customers that own Hydro One. You're planning on doing the exact opposite. You're going to run off with the sale proceeds and leave customers with a \$27-billion debt to pay. That can only mean higher hydro rates.

Deputy Premier, can you guarantee hydro customers that a sale of Hydro One will not result in higher hydro bills for decades to come?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think it's ironic to get this question from the party and the member opposite, who actually saddled Ontario taxpayers with this enormous stranded hydro debt. They are the ones who left this unsavory legacy to the people of Ontario that they are working hard towards paying off. In fact, it's this government that, year by year by year, has been paying off that stranded hydro debt, to the point that we can now proudly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, over the last 12 years, we have been paying off that debt that was left by the previous Conservative government. We are up to the point that we will be removing the debt retirement charge from the consumer ratepayers, because they have played part in that case.

We will continue to make sure that the stranded debt is paid. That's something that was left behind by the official opposition when they were in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The majority of the \$27-billion debt comes from David Peterson's decision to not have Darlington come in on time and on budget—in fact, \$14 billion over budget; that's the majority. The rest of it was

incurred by the old Ontario Hydro before I was even born and before you were even born. So get your story straight—

Applause.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —and stop telling falsehoods to the people of Ontario.

You have an obligation under the law not to fritter the money away, not to rob Peter to pay Paul—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In between the applause, I did hear something I would like him to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

You have an obligation, Minister, and I say to the government, to pay down that debt. It's legacy debt. It's debt that has been there for a long time. We're paying big interest on it. Hydro customers own Hydro One. They should be the ones who benefit through lower rates, or at least stable rates, for the next few decades. That's the purpose of the law.

We knew some scoundrel would come along at this point in history and try and steal that money for other purposes, to patch up your mismanagement of the last 12 years. Do the right thing and follow the law.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Before I continue, I'm going to offer a caution that, as we move along in this, I'm starting to hear some on-the-edge stuff and something I actually asked to be withdrawn. Let's just keep it within parliamentary language, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's rather rich to get this question—

Mr. Todd Smith: You're right. It's rich.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —from the official opposition, who made a mess, a big mess—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —of the hydro system in this province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —when they were in government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I am going to repeat myself, to ensure that those who were making noise while I was speaking—the member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order, the member from Simcoe North will come to order and the member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, that's the party that, when in government, made a mess of the hydro system in

this province. They had too many false starts. They were burning dirty coal to produce electricity in this province, polluting our air, causing asthma in our children. They're the ones who had that momentous blackout in our province; burning diesel in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We have been working hard over the last 12 years in rebuilding the energy system in this province, making sure that we clean up the energy system by shutting down coal-fired generation, making sure that we have renewable green electricity in our system and a reliable source of electricity for Ontarians.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: To the Acting Premier: The Premier herself claimed the cost of gas will increase over three cents under the Liberals' pay-to-pollute scheme, and with this Liberal government's track record, we know it will end up costing much more.

Even if we pretend it will only be three cents, as you claim, that will cost Ontarians an additional \$700 million a year. That's another \$100 to Ontario families, to shoulder your burden of mismanagement.

In rural Ontario, people don't have the choice not to drive. How are rural families, who must buy gas to get to work and get to school, regardless of the price, going to be able to afford this increase?

1050

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, I want to congratulate our Premier and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for taking a most important and momentous decision when it comes to ensuring that we actually deal with the issue of climate change in our province by introducing the cap-and-trade system. The official opposition needs to get their head up out of the quicksand. They've got to choose a lane. Are they going to continue to deny climate change or are they going to stand up for Ontarians and the future of our province when it comes to a cleaner environment and a better and stronger economy?

I guess now we know what the PC Party stands for. It's the pro-coal, pro-carbon party of Ontario. They're the only ones who are standing in support of carbon. The whole world is moving forward in making sure that we put a price on carbon and that we deal with greenhouse gas emissions because it is essential to the future prosperity of our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Acting Premier: This isn't the first time that the Liberals have copied a European energy plan before they saw the evidence. Your Green Energy Act was supposed to save the environment, reduce pollution and create jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Instead, it caused energy prices to skyrocket, made your Liberal friends rich and drove jobs out of this province. This pay-to-pollute scheme will be the Green Energy Act 2.0. However, this time, it won't just be electricity rates that soar. It's now a tax on everything. The Green Energy Act costs each household \$1,100 a year.

Acting Premier, how much more will your pay-to-pollute scheme cost Ontario households?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm fascinated by this line of questioning, Mr. Speaker. The party opposite put a cap-and-trade system on nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide. They traded between companies. They're down 46%. Mr. Speaker, you can hear that this is a very sensitive issue for the party opposite given how loud they're being right now.

We are about to design a cap-and-trade system. Where it is in place, in places like California and Quebec, it is actually enabling higher productivity. A carbon price in BC saw accelerated GDP growth and lower costs for everyone. When they learn something about the difference between cap-and-trade and taxes, which is sort of 101 for an MPP, they should—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Acting Premier: The degree to which this government has lost touch with reality is mind-boggling. One day, they rise in the House to tell us how Ontarians are not saving enough for retirement. The next day, they create a tax on everything that will take money right out of their pockets, right out of their savings accounts. Higher costs mean less disposable income. That means less money to save and less money to spend to keep the economy moving. That is basic economics.

Acting Premier, how much money will your tax on everything take from the retirement savings accounts of Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think it's time for a little lesson in basic economics here. Tembec—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh yeah, we'll get that from you, Glen. You of the million-dollar toilet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, that got you your second one. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order, and the member from Lanark, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tembec, a great Ontario forestry company, reduces its emissions and improves its plant. The average GHG emissions from an average forestry company, let's say, is 50%. We set the cap at 40%. Tembec is at 30%. Tembec then has a surplus. It may sell it to Cascade, which may

need two or three years to do that. Cascade then can buy the time. The money Tembec gets back is reinvested in a higher-productivity plant, more jobs. That's how it works.

It's a good thing, as Martha Stewart would say.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question: The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. First, the Liberals showed how they disrespect Ontarians by keeping their plan to sell Hydro One secret during the election campaign. Now they are disrespecting Ontarians and this assembly in the way that they've rolled out the Clark report.

My question to the Acting Premier is: Can he phone the Premier and tell her to get over here and answer the questions of the opposition?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm compelled to indicate that if this continues, I shall pass the question and move to the official opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As stated, I'm indicating to the third party that if this continues, I will pass their questions and move to the official opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I'm not going to do that if I continue to hear it from this side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is the official opposition prepared to ask the next question? I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

POWER PLANT

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, yesterday, the Globe and Mail uncovered yet another sordid chapter in the ongoing saga of the gas plant scandal. One of the Liberal Party's favourite companies, Eastern Power Ltd., has gotten special treatment yet again.

The company at the centre of the gas plant scandal has been given another sweetheart deal wherein they get natural gas at far below market value. Over the next two decades, this will save them millions of dollars.

The Ontario Energy Board is supposed to be there to protect consumers. How do consumers benefit from this decision? With this ruling they're going to be fleeced yet again by your government due to higher natural gas prices for consumers.

Acting Premier, when you cancelled the gas plants during the election of 2011, did you promise Eastern Power that they would get cheap gas in the future so that they would keep quiet on your cynical, unethical, Liberal seat-saving decision?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I don't know if it's something that I said that got the third party all worked up, but I thank the member from Renfrew—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay will come to order. The leader of the third party will come to order. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay will come to order. The leader of the third party will come to order. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is warned. The leader of the third party is warned. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Sergeant-at-Arms will dismiss the member from Timmins–James Bay.
Mr. Bisson was escorted from the chamber.

1110

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party is named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Sergeant-at-Arms will dismiss the leader of the third party.

Ms. Horwath was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane is named.

Mr. Vanthof was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The remaining members of the third party caucus will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The remaining members of the third party will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The remaining members of the third party caucus are warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is named.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Sergeant-at-Arms will dismiss the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Toronto–Danforth are named.

Ms. DiNovo was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Sergeant-at-Arms will dismiss the member from Nickel Belt.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I refer to the standing orders, section 15(c): “If any member on being named and directed to withdraw from the House refuses to obey the direction of the Speaker when summoned under the Speaker’s order by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker shall call to the attention of the House that force is necessary in order to compel obedience and such member shall thereupon, without motion, be suspended from the service of the House for the remainder of the session.”

Interjections.

Mr. Tabuns was escorted from the chamber.

M^{me} Gélinas was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from London West are named.

Mr. Singh was escorted from the chamber.

Ms. Armstrong was escorted from the chamber.

Ms. Taylor was escorted from the chamber.

Ms. Sattler was escorted from the chamber.

1120

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Windsor–Tecumseh and Niagara Falls are named.

Mr. Mantha was escorted from the chamber.

Mr. Hatfield was escorted from the chamber.

Mr. Gates was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The question having been put by the official opposition, I will allow the Acting Premier to respond.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I think I can hear things again now. Apologies to the members of the community here in the public gallery for the question period they have witnessed so far.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I may not be finished naming people.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As the member opposite I am sure knows, private sector gas distribution companies are regulated by the Ontario Energy Board. The OEB is an independent regulator with a mandate to protect the best interests of energy consumers in Ontario. As an independent regulator, the OEB has the authority to enforce its statutory powers.

I understand that in this particular case, the OEB has ruled that it will grant the certificate to Greenfield on the

basis that it is in the best public interest and that customers will not be unduly burdened. The government supports the board and its processes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, where was I? Acting Premier, there is an odour around this OEB decision and it has nothing to do with the smell of natural gas. This sweetheart deal is going to result in higher prices for consumers. After 12 years of Liberals in office, energy customers can hardly afford further increases to their cost of living.

After all of the scandals during your long reign in power, the people of Ontario know how you do business: special deals and favours for well-connected Liberal insiders who scratch your back when election time rolls around.

Acting Premier, I ask you once again: How can voters believe that you did not offer Eastern Power cheap gas so that they would go along with your Liberal seat-saving plan back in the 2011 election?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I am confident that the member opposite very well knows the kind of system we have in place in Ontario. The regulation around pricing and approval process in the energy sector is done by an independent regulator called the Ontario Energy Board. It is a quasi-judicial body; it's arm's length from the government. The government does not intervene in the matters or the affairs of the Ontario Energy Board. It has a very robust process, in fact, where the public and proponents and opponents can participate. We respect the process and the decisions that the Ontario Energy Board makes. I ask the member opposite to respect their decision as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, we will not be participating in this question period—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not recognize the member—

Ms. Cindy Forster:—until the Premier arrives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Simcoe North.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Education. When asked about OSSTF walking away from negotiations during the scrum yesterday, you simply shrugged it off. You implied that this was just a tactic and they would be back in no time.

We've been saying it for years: You have severely mismanaged the province's finances and as a result of that we are broke. Because of that, on Monday, children in Durham might show up at a school to face a picket line, and other boards will follow soon after. Your Liberal mismanagement will force thousands of kids out of the classroom.

Minister, please don't shrug this off. Will you get serious about negotiations and prevent this strike from happening?

Hon. Liz Sandals: First of all, I must say that that was a serious misrepresentation of what I said yesterday. What I said yesterday was that we remain absolutely committed to being at the table and negotiating and that I am, in fact, very concerned that OSSTF chose to walk away from the provincial table.

What I would also point out is that they said they suspended their participation at the provincial table. They did not say they ended their participation at the provincial table. I did point out the accurate words that were used to the media.

What I also said was that I was very concerned that, having suspended their participation at the provincial table, this greatly increased the probability of a strike in Durham, and that very much concerned me.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, the other side of the table has said you aren't serious about discussions and negotiations. That's very clear; that was in their memorandum.

1130

You keep saying you won't "negotiate in the media." Well, apparently you won't negotiate at all, and apparently a number of boards won't negotiate at all, along with your central bargaining. Your budget is already forcing other school boards to cut special education teachers. You're fast-tracking the closure of school community hubs right across this province, in as short as nine weeks.

Now, just weeks before graduation and prom, your years of financial mismanagement are coming back to haunt you, and the people who will suffer the most are the students and parents across this province. Because of your mismanagement of the economy, parents might not be able to see their child walk across the stage to graduate.

Minister, what are you going to say to those parents with this mess you've got on your hands with the fiscal mismanagement of this province?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Well, the first thing I would say to the member opposite, and to everyone in the province, is that I continue to believe that what we need are negotiated settlements. We have nine central tables. Discussions are currently ongoing at eight of those central tables. I fully anticipate that we will have discussions ongoing at nine of those central tables when we get over this "suspension," and that we will work very hard to negotiate collective agreements. And we will negotiate them at the table, because everything I've learned about collective bargaining over the years tells me that when you negotiate in the media, negotiations fail.

So our goal is to get to the table and to negotiate settlements, because negotiating is the way we deliver programs for students.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, last week, the Select Committee on

Sexual Violence and Harassment travelled to northern Ontario to hear first-hand from service providers and victims. During the meeting in Sioux Lookout, the committee heard a presentation from two RNs from the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre who expressed concerns over staff training within their assault care and treatment program.

Currently, there are only four full-time RNs hospital-wide qualified to provide care to sexual assault victims. In order to gain the proper skills, these nurses need to travel to urban settings like Toronto to complete the full forensic training. The RAO has stated that, in the past, when the programs were originally funded, they were monitored under priority programs at the ministry level, but they have since been transferred to the hospital, which is burdensome on their budgets.

Minister, will you commit to providing the necessary funding for training nurses, especially those in northern communities, so they can properly treat these victims?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to respond.

I first want to recognize, Mr. Speaker, the important work that that committee, the committee on sexual violence and assault, is doing on behalf of all Ontarians. This is incredibly important work and we are all looking forward to the recommendations, as well as to implementing the important policies and procedures and systems that are required to backstop those recommendations. It's a very important issue to me personally—as well as, of course, as Minister of Health—and to the government as a whole.

Sexual violence and harassment are, unfortunately, a reality in every community in this province. We must continue to work hard to address it, fundamentally to prevent and stamp out sexual violence and assault where it occurs, but unfortunately, where it does occur, we need to respond in appropriate ways. The member opposite is reflecting one of the many ways that the province is involved in providing a response. I'm happy to address it specifically in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: These small, rural hospitals, especially those that are located in remote communities like Sioux Lookout, need dedicated funding to ensure that nurses have the proper training to care for victims of sexual assault, especially in the collection of the forensic evidence to prosecute the offenders. When evidence isn't collected in a timely manner, sexual assault charges can be thrown out by the court. In this case, with only four full-time RNs qualified to provide care, it can take anywhere from 24 to 72 hours before a victim may even be seen.

As hospitals work to balance their budgets, the sexual assault/domestic violence treatment centres have experienced deep program cuts. Minister, you can act today. Will you commit to the funding before the budget, so we can ensure the RNs in small rural hospitals, especially in northern Ontario, are able to receive this important training? Please, Minister, act today.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I thank the member for the question. This is a very important issue. In fact, the government currently funds 35 hospital-based sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres right across the province, including—I believe there are eight in northern Ontario specifically. These are centres that provide comprehensive and timely support to women, children and men who are victims and survivors of sexual assault or domestic violence.

All of these 35 centres across the province are staffed by health care professionals specially trained to deliver high-quality care. Evidence collection—all of those centres have access to rape kits and other processes that are required to collect and provide that evidence in a timely fashion, as the member opposite has indicated is so important. They also provide education to other health care providers and community agencies in the general public.

There is always, in everything we do as a province and as a government, more work to be done. I hear the specific question with regard to training from the member opposite. I will be following up.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Toby Barrett: Also to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: We have a problem in our riding. A Simcoe doctor is retiring with a roster of 4,600 patients and has no successor. This exacerbates an already fragile situation.

In June 2013, another example: A Port Dover physician with a roster of 2,000 retired, again without a replacement.

Over the years, I've met with a committee trying to build a new health centre in Port Dover. They're enthusiastic, but they need doctors. I wrote you on January 22, seeking possible solutions. I await a reply to that letter.

Minister, I'm asking: Could you provide us with some advice and some action to help our community down in Norfolk county attract physicians and also help attract physicians to other underserved areas?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It is a very important issue in terms of physician supply around this province. It can be challenging in certain parts of the province, more challenging than in others, to gain that supply of physicians that's so important to provide that primary care support to residents.

We have a number of initiatives that are under way—work by HealthForceOntario that specifically targets underserved and regularly serviced areas that are facing challenges with regard to physician supply. We also have a program called Health Care Connect that aims to attach unattached patients to new family doctors.

But it's important to recognize as well that we have made significant progress in this province in terms of attachment of patients. We now have about 94% of Ontarians who have a regular primary care provider—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins:—that's a physician, but it may also be another primary care provider. In the supplementary, I'll talk to other investments that we've made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Minister. There's a Norfolk General Hospital recruitment team and also this Port Dover committee.

One option, I feel, is that they need an empty family health organization to better enable them to attract doctors. I'm also told of a need for an additional health organization in west Norfolk, down in the Port Rowan and Delhi area.

Minister, you have indicated previously in question period that you would like to see more family health teams in small towns and in rural Ontario. However, I understand there is a cap, allowing something like only 20 new family doctors a month in the entire province. We graduate something like 500 a year from Ontario's medical schools. In the summer, I was in Norfolk; we need another 14 doctors, according to the formula.

My question, Minister: Why will you not create new family health teams or other empty family health organizations, for example?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the member knows that I was born in Norfolk General Hospital, so this is a part of the province that I know very well, and he's acknowledging that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's a plaque on the wall.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There's no plaque.

This is a very important issue. The fact is that, in the last 10 years—there are 2,300 more family doctors practising in this province than there were before. That's an almost 25% increase.

But there is still more work to be done. Nothing prevents family doctors, for example, if that's what we're talking about, from setting up shop anywhere in this province. They can do so through fee-for-service. They can create a family health group as well, where they can get together with other family doctors. They can work as locums as well. They can replace a retiring physician, for example, on a family health team.

1140

But also, we have allocated 20 spots per month for underserved areas around the province. We've specifically looked to our LHINS to identify, for the purpose of employing these family health team doctors, what parts of the province should be included. It may be that this part of Ontario is part of that designated area. We should know in the next several weeks.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Acting Premier: Acting Premier, earlier in question period, our leader asked you about what would be done with the proceeds of the sale of Hydro One. He pointed out very clearly that under the Electricity Act, the proceeds of that sale must go to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. in order to pay down the electricity debt in this province.

I'm going to ask you a very simple question: Do you intend to obey the law of the land here in the province of Ontario with respect to the disposition of those funds, or do you plan to break the law and put this burden onto the backs of the electricity consumers, who have already paid for that debt?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm also going to caution again: Going through to something unparliamentary also includes accusing someone of a criminal act. I'm going to offer him advice not to go down there again.

Please respond.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to restate the fact that we have worked extremely hard over the last 12 years in rebuilding the energy system in this province. A lot of concerted effort has been made in making sure that we have got the security of generation in our province and that we have a secure transmission and distribution system in our province.

We have worked hard in eliminating coal as a source of generating electricity in our province. In fact, we are extremely proud that we are the first province in North America to be able to do so. It's one of the single largest greenhouse gas emission-reduction projects, in fact, to the point that even the Conservative Prime Minister of this country is trying to take credit for that action, after opposing that decision again and again.

Speaker, not to mention—to ensure that we have renewable energy, we will continue to work on our energy sector to make sure that it meets the demands of our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't believe I got an answer there. But, Minister, it is not the responsibility of the electricity consumer in this province to bail you out of your financial mismanagement of the past 12 years. It is not their job to now pay for your infrastructure plans. They pay for the electricity system. Now that you've decided that you're going to sell off a portion of Hydro One, it is the law, under the Electricity Act, that that money must go to pay off the electricity debt. The money is not there for any other purpose.

I'll ask you in a different way: Will you stand in your place today and tell the people of Ontario that, as a minister of this crown, you will obey the law?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This government—and the people of Ontario—has been working extremely hard over the last 12 years to clean up the mess that the party opposite left behind when they were in government. They are the ones who settled—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Break the law again and we'll have to bring in the OPP again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the party opposite saddened Ontario with a massive stranded hydro debt, which we have been paying year after year.

We've been very clear with the people of Ontario that our priority is to build Ontario up by investing in critical infrastructure in all our communities. In fact, I hear members opposite standing up all the time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We hear members from the opposite party standing up all the time, asking for critical, important investment in our infrastructure. Be it our highways, our roads or our public transit, this government has ambitious plans. We're going to invest in our infrastructure to improve the quality of life for Ontarians.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 17.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fraser, John
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Miltzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted

Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Takharr, Harinder S.
Vernille, Dalene
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gretzky, Lisa

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Jones, Sylvia
MacLaren, Jack
McDonnell, Jim
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would like to introduce two of my three sons, who are here—Evan Martow and Mitch Martow—and my niece Ella Gladstone-Martow. I want to introduce my friend Esther Milstein, who is here with her mother, a Holocaust survivor, Genia Brykman; another Holocaust survivor, whose daughter Judy I'm friends with—Carmela Betel, and her friend Lucy Shaar; and we have children of Holocaust survivors: Howard Ganz, Mindy Ganz and Fay Ganz, as well as Marshal Cohen and Ari Gold. Thank you so much for coming.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL NURSES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge the accomplishments of Mount Sinai Hospital nursing staff and the recent awarding of the designation of Magnet status for excellence in nursing and patient care.

Mount Sinai is the only hospital in Canada to be officially awarded this designation, which is granted by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. Magnet status recognizes health care organizations for quality patient care, nursing excellence, and innovations in professional nursing practice. To achieve it, the hospital must demonstrate strong leadership among its nursing staff, excellent interprofessional relationships among its health care team, and high levels of employee satisfaction, engagement and professional development.

I'm pleased to say that Mount Sinai not only achieved the required levels but in many areas surpassed the levels of other comparative Magnet organizations. For example, Mount Sinai had a significantly lower turnover rate than others, it had a higher average length of employment for its registered nurses, and a higher percentage of its nurses had graduate degrees.

This is a wonderful achievement and, in addition to being a great accomplishment and acknowledgment of the care that Mount Sinai provides, it is likely to have additional benefits, such as the attraction and retention of nurses who are keen to work in this type of professional environment.

I can't conclude my remarks without acknowledging Joseph Mapa, Mount Sinai's chief executive, and Mary Agnes Beduz, the vice-president of professional practice

and chief nurse executive at Mount Sinai. Mary Agnes, of course, is the mother of our former PC staff member Alex Beduz, who worked in this building for many years.

Congratulations to the wonderful nurses at Mount Sinai for a job very, very well done.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today during question period, the Premier released the Clark report, which the government has been clear will form the basis of the province's fiscal framework, with implications for at least a generation. This report is the most significant shift in public service delivery in the last 25 years, and question period is the part of the parliamentary day when the government is held accountable for its administrative policies and the conduct of its ministers, both individually and collectively.

In his decision on the Magna budget, Speaker Carr warned about the dangers of circumventing the scrutiny of the Legislature. He said, "I have a lingering unease about the road we are going down, and my sense is that the House and the general public have the same unease.... It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak; it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so."

Obviously, this government learned from the Magna budget, but instead of respecting parliamentary process, it has done exactly what Carr feared: It establishes a new way to circumvent the checks and balances of this Legislature.

Speaker, it's a sad day for transparency and accountability in the province of Ontario.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: In a ceremony at Queen's Park later today, we will recognize and honour 12 Holocaust survivors whose stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit are a testimony to the human will to live. These Holocaust survivors, who are in the House today, came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives and will be honoured for their wonderful contributions as citizens of Ontario. Those to be honoured are: Irving Bart, Sam Bart, Jan Blumenstein, Gitta Ganz, Dave Gold, Max Iland, Lore Jacobs, Martin Kulbak, George Landesman, Manny Langer, Norman Srebrolow and George Stern.

Today we recognize Yom ha-Shoah V'Hagvurah, Holocaust Memorial Day, a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world. This is the 22nd year the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day. I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world, outside of the state of Israel, to officially recognize it.

As we mourn the death of the six million victims, we also celebrate the lives of those who survived. I have visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and

museum in Jerusalem, several times. The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and the story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust. As a Jew, these memories strike the heart and the soul.

Every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family members or friends. All members in the community lost someone. The Holocaust echoes through generations. The loss is extraordinary. At Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it.

In the Valley of the Communities, you stand before wall after wall, carved out of solid rock, listing the names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed, had life, in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names, forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem. It was there that I found the name of the city where my father was born, Czestochowa, and the city where my mother was born, Sosnowiec.

The Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew. For years, survivors walked among us with tattoos to mark the horror they lived through. Their stories, their scars and the numbers carved callously into their skins made the Holocaust real, personal and powerful for generations to come. There are fewer and fewer survivors still living. Fewer people are telling first-hand accounts of personal experiences. Soon the tattoos will be seen only in pictures, movies and museums while the stories slowly fade and with them the hard-learned lessons for those who survived, rebuilt and rose up.

The central theme of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2015 is "Seventy Years Since the End of the War: The Pain of Liberation and Rebuilding a Life."

The partisan Abba Kovner used to tell about a Jewish survivor whom he had met in Vilna when accompanying the liberating Soviet soldiers when they arrived to the destroyed ghetto. The woman and the little girl she carried in her arms hid in a small nook for almost a year, and with the liberation came out for the first time from their hiding place. Seeing her mother crying while telling her story for the first time, suddenly the girl asked in Yiddish, "Mother, are we allowed to cry already?"

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities or their sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

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Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II: in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia. It's evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations 67 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust. The declaration recognized the

inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law.

We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms; we must appreciate, nurture and protect them; and we must constantly remind ourselves how easy it is to lose them.

On Sunday, April 19, 2015, at 11 a.m., a community Holocaust commemoration ceremony will take place at Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto, at 613 Clark Avenue West, Thornhill, to commemorate the six million Jewish souls who perished in the Holocaust and to educate future generations of Canadians about the universal lessons of this dark period in history.

On Yom ha-Shoah, Jewish communities around the world recite a brief traditional mourner's prayer, the Kaddish. I want to continue our tradition of saying Kaddish in memory of those people whose *yahrzeit* is unknown. On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families, I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer, which is something for which all people may pray. I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York Centre has asked for unanimous consent to recite the prayer. Do we agree? Agreed.

I ask all members of the House to please stand while the member from York Centre recites the prayer.

Prayer in Hebrew.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: One line of this prayer translates, "He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us."

We must always remember so that the world will never forget. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member.

A gentle reminder that out of respect for the member and respect for the topic, I will be lenient with anyone who decides to speak on this topic in the normal time period that's allotted for members.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mrs. Gila Martow: I first want to welcome all the guests. Many Holocaust survivors are here today to hear us speak and to attend some memorial services. We had a beautiful reception, so I want to thank the organizers. Bonjour, bienvenue and, in Hebrew, *bruchim ha-baim*. Welcome.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I spoke on the Rwandan genocide as well as attending an event to raise awareness of the ongoing Yazidi genocide. Today, we commemorate yet another genocide, the over six million men, women and children who lost their lives for the simple fact that they were Jewish.

I am honoured by the presence of two Holocaust survivors and some of their friends and relatives today.

Carmela Betel, in the gallery, is a survivor who lost her husband, Joe Betel, last year. Joe accompanied the March of the Living youth groups and regularly spoke to high school students and other Simon Wiesenthal groups on his experiences surviving the Holocaust.

We are also joined by Genia Brykman, accompanied by her daughter Esther Milstein, who's a very close friend of mine. Genia is 91 years young and enjoys a very active life in the community—still driving. I told her, "Well, today, you missed one day at Yorkdale, Genia."

Esther and her husband, Harold, are the children of survivors. All four of their parents survived by living through unspeakable horrors from 1939 to 1945. The four survivors, their four parents, collectively lost 17 of their siblings, all their parents and grandparents and most of their extended family.

Mr. Speaker, I have twice visited Yad Vashem, a Jewish memorial and museum dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust, in Jerusalem. It is also a memorial and a museum to the righteous among the nations. Those are the people who acted to save Jewish lives, often at peril to themselves, and they often did pay the ultimate sacrifice. They were often squealed upon by their neighbours.

I want to just say that the museum's work is ongoing. I want to invite everybody here to visit the museum in Israel, to visit Israel and see the modern democratic state which remains a shining beacon of democracy in the Middle East.

The slaughter of the innocent reminds us of the evil that still exists in the world. Together we must work harder to ensure that "Never again" are more than just words.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today during question period, the Premier released the Clark report, which the government has been clear will form the basis of the province's fiscal framework with implications for at least a generation. This report is the most significant shift in public service delivery in the last 25 years, and question period is the part of the parliamentary day when the government is held accountable for its administrative policies and the conduct of its ministers, both individually and collectively.

In his decision on the Magna budget, Speaker Carr warned about the dangers of circumventing the scrutiny of the Legislature. He said, "If left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?"

Obviously, this government learned from the Magna budget, but instead of respecting parliamentary process, it has done exactly what Carr feared: It established a new way to circumvent the checks and balances of this Legislature.

Speaker, this is a sad day for transparency and accountability in Ontario.

LEADING WOMEN, LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm proud to rise today to recognize the recipients of this year's Leading Women, Leading Girls, Building Communities awards. These awards acknowledge and celebrate women and girls who demonstrate exceptional leadership in improving the lives of others in their communities.

Recipients are individuals who break down barriers in the professional world and champion issues such as equality and healthy relationships. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, they provide positive examples to other women and girls in their communities.

Tonight, I will be recognizing 15 leading women and four leading girls in my riding of Scarborough—Agin-court, with the youngest recipient being 13 years old. Celebrating the 10th anniversary of these awards, it is inspiring to see the contributions of strong female leaders in our communities.

For example, 2013 Leading Girl recipient Alice Wang, the past president of the ACI business council, is now a second-year student at the Schulich School of Business. And 2012 Leading Women recipient Karen Peach, principal at David Lewis Public School, has been motivating girls to become leaders in their community throughout her 45 years with the Toronto District School Board.

Speaker, recognizing and encouraging women's leadership is an important step in building Ontario up and fostering an inclusive society.

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK

Mr. Ted Arnott: It has now been over two years since the Liberal government agreed to transfer land to the federal government to create the Rouge National Urban Park, which would be the largest urban park in North America. The creation of the Rouge National Urban Park would provide strong protection measures for the land between Lake Ontario and the Oak Ridges moraine, as we know Parks Canada maintains high standards.

We also know that the Rouge National Urban Park would be protected by dedicated year-round park wardens. These wardens would ensure the ecological, environmental and cultural integrity of the park by enforcing rules against illegal dumping, poaching, polluting, hunting, vandalism and the theft of cultural artifacts—all issues that have plagued the park for many years.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Infrastructure is continuing to play politics with the Rouge park project. He's breaking the agreement and even using his recalcitrance as a Liberal fundraising strategy.

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By putting politics ahead of good policy, the minister is putting at risk almost \$144 million committed by the federal government for this initiative. This is money that would be used to protect the environmental integrity of

this land and ensure that the Rouge National Urban Park is enjoyed by the people of this province for decades to come.

Today we call upon the minister to stop playing games, stop delaying, find another issue to fundraise on and stop holding the Rouge park hostage. Let's instead take the next step forward and work together to create the greatest urban park in North America.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. John Fraser: Today is Advance Care Planning Day across Canada, a day when those in the hospice and palliative care sector are urging Canadians to speak up and talk to their family and friends about their health care wishes and what they would want if they were unable to speak for themselves.

The end of life is not something that we often like to think about, and it's important that people have advance care plans so that they are more satisfied with the care they receive at the end of life. It is important that their loved ones will know and understand their wishes at a time that is very difficult.

Here in Ontario, we are fortunate to have excellent hospice palliative care, and we are working to grow our capacity to provide palliative care where and when it's needed. Hospice palliative care eases the pain and symptoms that accompany dying, and also the important social, spiritual and practical aspects of the end of life. Advance care planning is really about the things that are most important to us in life and at the end of life.

Today I am joining Hospice Palliative Care Ontario in urging everyone to speak up and talk about your thoughts and wishes for your care. Think about what's important to you. Learn about the kind of care that is available and what it can achieve. Talk about it with your loved ones so that they can understand your wishes. Decide on an alternative caregiver who can help you make decisions and speak for you if you can't speak for yourself. It's not an easy conversation, but having it in advance will make it easier for you and your loved ones at the end of life, a time to celebrate life and say our goodbyes.

SPEED SKATING

PATINAGE DE VITESSE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On March 28, I was honoured to be at the opening ceremony of the speed skating provincial B and masters championships hosted by the Gloucester Concorde Speed Skating Club in my riding. The event took place at the Elizabeth Manley arena inside of the Bob MacQuarrie complex.

Un merci particulier à Janique Gagnon pour l'invitation et l'excellente organisation. I would also like to thank the volunteers who no doubt spent countless hours of their own time making this competition a reality.

It was an absolute privilege to be in the company of so many young skaters, 11 years and up, representing clubs

from all across Ontario. Seeing these young athletes so dedicated was impressive.

J'aimerais aussi souligner toute ma reconnaissance aux nombreux parents réunis en appui à leurs enfants. We cannot forget the sacrifices those families often make to bring their child to such a level of competition, and I thank all of them today.

I was also quite touched to personally meet Kevin Frost, an award-winning blind and deaf speed skater who has recently been invited to compete in the Blind Impaired World Cup in Scotland, and Ivanie Blondin, a 25-year-old who represented Canada in long-track speed skating at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Both of these determined and passionate athletes are inspiring and, I will say, are from the riding of Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say congratulations to all of the athletes competing on that day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas in 2010 the Ontario Liberal government promised to consult with voters before implementing a revised sex education curriculum which many parents felt was age-inappropriate and too explicit; and

"Whereas since 2010 the Ontario public has not been given adequate opportunity to provide feedback on proposed sex education changes; and

"Whereas in late October 2014 the Ontario Liberal government announced that more revisions to the sex

education curriculum would be implemented in time for the next school year; and

"Whereas the announced plans to consult only one hand-picked parent per school does not constitute broad public feedback on the curriculum, and therefore, the Ontario Liberal government is breaking its 2010 promise to consult the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Allow all residents of Ontario the opportunity to view and offer their response to proposed changes to the sex education component of the health and physical education curriculum."

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks' table through page Ethan.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

Speaker, I agree with this, will affix my signature and give it to page Megan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here signed by a great many people, not only in my riding, but from around the province, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to do this, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for giving me the time to present it.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

"Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia are seniors;

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"Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

"Whereas Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Abdullah.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

Speaker, I'm pleased to join with the Ontario Dental Association in supporting this petition. I sign it and send it down with page Colin.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Hydro One rates continue to rise; and

"Whereas the major costs on electricity bills are delivery charges, administrative and regulatory charges and the global adjustment, not the cost of energy consumed; and

"Whereas reliable and affordable power is a necessity for Ontarians; and

"Whereas the Auditor General showed that the debt retirement charge has collected more ratepayer funds than required to pay Ontario Hydro's residual stranded debt; and

"Whereas the smart meter initiative has been shown to be a waste of ratepayers' money and has caused ongoing

overbilling issues that have driven many families into financial hardship, such as the Maple Ridge Centre's \$25,000 bill following two years of Hydro's failure to send a single bill; and

"Whereas Hydro One insists on raiding Ontarians' bank accounts to pay for mistaken bills, and refuses to issue refunds as any law-abiding private business would have to; and

"Whereas the Liberal government's latest schemes of carbon taxes and selling parts of Hydro One without paying off the utility's debt will only cause bills to rise further;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To implement a standard delivery charge that reflects the cost of maintaining the electricity distribution and delivery system;

"(2) To immediately remove HST and the debt retirement charge on hydro bills;

"(3) To immediately give electricity consumers greater control over their billing and payment options;

"(4) To make Hydro One accountable to writing off consumers' unbilled usage older than 12 months;

"(5) To follow the law as stated in the Electricity Act and channel all proceeds of a Hydro One sale to paying off the utility's debt;

"(6) Cancel all proposed carbon tax and cap-and-trade plans."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Madison.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I could not support this more. I will sign it and give it to page Ashton.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir de présenter l'élimination des microbilles des produits cosmétiques à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent

ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Il me fait plaisir d'apposer ma signature à cette pétition et de la remettre à Ethan. Merci.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Carbon Tax" petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

This is signed by many people from my riding. I'll hand it to page Samantha.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to read a petition to the Legislature of Ontario that reads:

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex ... has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario" government "to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks' desk through Jae Min.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

I agree with this, will affix my signature and give it to page Thomas.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Ted Arnett: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

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"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTING PASSENGER SAFETY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SÉCURITÉ DES PASSAGERS

Mr. Fraser moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant le Code de la route afin d'augmenter la pénalité prévue à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis de conduire, certificat d'immatriculation ou autorisation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to stand in the House today to speak to the second reading of Bill 53, the Protecting Passenger Safety Act. C'est un privilège de prendre la parole ici aujourd'hui pour parler de la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 53, Loi de 2015 sur la protection de la sécurité des passagers. Ce projet de loi vise à protéger le public.

This bill is about protecting public safety. Public safety is something that I think we can all agree, as legislators, we have an obligation to protect. Governments regulate all forms of public transportation: airplanes, buses, shuttles and taxis. These regulations are primarily put in place to protect public safety.

Municipalities have the responsibility of regulating taxis. Taxis are a form of public transportation. Municipalities set up the requirements for regular vehicle and driver safety checks, in-car cameras, GPS and proper commercial insurance. Municipal regulations are enforced through the Highway Traffic Act.

The Protecting Passenger Safety Act proposes amendments to the Highway Traffic Act that would increase penalties for individuals who transport passengers for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization.

Bill 53 would increase the fines for those caught in violation of the act and proposes changes to include demerit-point penalties, a 30-day licence suspension for reoffenders and a 30-day vehicle impoundment for subsequent offences after a first conviction.

These changes are necessary to address a long-standing issue that the city of Ottawa and other municipalities across the province continue to struggle with. Illegal or bandit taxicabs pose significant risks to the safety of Ontarians, and the penalties that are currently in place are not providing our municipal partners with sufficient means to address this problem. The Protecting Passenger Safety Act is a direct response to these challenges.

This bill does not make anything illegal that is not already illegal. Cette loi ne rend rien illégal qui n'est pas déjà illégal. What it does is provide for more effective enforcement of regulations already in place.

After being approached by the city of Ottawa with their concerns about bandit cabs, I learned the difficulties that they have faced in their attempts at protecting the public from illegal cabs. Although Ottawa and most municipalities already have laws and standards that prohibit these activities, illegal taxicab drivers who may not have proper commercial insurance or have criminal record checks continue to break the law. By increasing penalties for illegal cabs, the Protecting Passenger Safety Act will provide municipalities with the enforcement tools they need to address the serious safety concerns surrounding bandit taxicab drivers.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to note that the member from Nepean-Carleton also introduced a bill that's very similar. I'd like to congratulate her on her work. Our bills are very close. I think it underlines the fact that this is an issue of public safety; it's not one of partisanship. I think it's something that we can all agree on.

Investigations in the city of Ottawa have uncovered a number of serious safety concerns relating to bandit taxicabs. As a note, I was talking to one of my colleagues here in the Legislature about the bill, and he said that the first time he arrived in Toronto at the airport, he got scooped. He got into a bandit taxicab and, by the time he got to his destination, the fare was \$20 higher than what they had agreed upon. That just underlines that this is something that can affect all sorts of people. When you're in a car and somebody else is driving, you're very vulnerable.

The city of Ottawa operated its first sting in 2006, which resulted in 100 charges laid against individuals operating bandit taxicabs. Subsequent stings have turned up an unlicensed driver who was consuming beer while driving and had a firearm in the trunk. They also found an unlicensed taxicab with no commercial insurance being driven by someone with a suspended licence. They have found unlicensed drivers, drivers with criminal records, drivers operating a vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol, drivers operating without car insurance, and drivers misleading vulnerable passengers with regard to the fares.

This is a tragic consequence of not being able to enforce the law: In September of last year, an Ottawa bandit taxicab driver was charged and convicted with sexual assault, forcible confinement and extortion. It was very tragic for the young lady who was involved in this. The police, at the time, were very concerned, and they're still concerned, that this person may have actually committed other crimes that they were not aware of. It cannot be said more plainly than this: That individual in question was using his illegal cab to trawl for vulnerable women to assault.

Unlicensed cabs put people at risk—most significantly, women, seniors and youth. You're very vulnerable in a car. I don't know if anybody is as old as I am, but if you remember hitchhiking or getting into a car with somebody you just met, you're not in control. You're very vulnerable, and I'd ask people to think of that if they've ever been in that situation.

Nous plaçons énormément de confiance dans les personnes qui nous fournissent les transports publics. Nous le faisons dans l'attente qu'elles respectent les règlements pratiques de la société, mis en place pour notre sécurité.

I'm an MPP, but I'm also a son, a husband, a father and a new grandfather. So what's important to me is that the car and driver that's taking my mom home from the pool when she's swimming in the morning, or my daughter home from the market on a Saturday night when she's out with their friends and they've been drinking, or taking my grandson to his first medical appointment—that someone impartial has checked that the driver and car are safe and that all those things that we put in place to protect people are there. That's part of what governments do: They regulate and provide oversight for all forms of public transportation. In my opinion, the regulations that are most important are the ones that protect public safety.

Il est bien évident qu'une amende de 300 \$ pour avoir exploité un taxi illégal ne dissuadera personne. Voilà pourquoi je propose une augmentation des pénalités. Ces pénalités devraient refléter l'importance du respect des règlements qui assurent la sécurité des passagers et des chauffeurs.

It's clear that a \$300 fine for operating an illegal taxi is not a deterrent, which is why I've proposed that the penalties be increased. These penalties need to reflect the importance of following the rules that protect the passenger and the driver.

Most municipalities have rules like regular vehicle safety checks; driver's licence, driving record and criminal record checks; in-car cameras and GPS; and proper commercial insurance, so that in the event of something happening, passengers are not left in legal limbo, often fighting in court for the very little or no compensation that they're entitled to.

Introducing demerit points and increasing fines provide a consequence that will underline the seriousness of the offence and the risk to public safety. Licence suspensions and vehicle impoundments will protect the public from reoffenders.

Bill 53 does not affect community services like Operation Red Nose or drives to medical appointments, nor does it affect carpooling. These activities are governed by a different set of rules and will not be affected by the changes in this bill.

1350

The Protecting Passenger Safety Act is just that: It's about protecting passenger safety and ensuring that our parents and our kids can travel in a hired taxi with the knowledge that they are protected. It's about stopping people who would use their car to prey on vulnerable people. Is there room for competition and innovation in this industry? Absolutely. But it must be done in a way that makes sure that public safety is first.

Increased safety and security for passengers and consumer choice are not mutually exclusive. Even the Competition Bureau, which regulates competition and encourages competition in Canada, said there is a need for regulation in this industry in a report written last fall.

I think that it's important to highlight again that this bill does not propose any rules that are not already in place. The things we are talking about, from operating a cab without a proper licence to driving without the required insurance, are already illegal. These standards are put in place to protect public safety, and it is reasonable to expect that everyone will follow them.

Bandit taxicabs are a serious and long-standing issue that needs to be addressed, especially in my community of Ottawa. Municipalities are asking for these changes, and we owe it to Ontarians to take action.

If you believe in public safety and the importance of ensuring that Ontarians can get into a cab knowing that proper checks have been in place, then you should support this bill.

J'encourage tous les membres de cette Chambre d'appuyer le projet de loi 53. J'attends avec impatience le débat.

I would urge all members of the House to support Bill 53, and I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I stand today to speak to Bill 53, the Protecting Passenger Safety Act, which increases penalties for those who operate bandit taxis. As the transportation critic for the Progressive Conservative Party, this is an issue that I have given a lot of consideration to, and I commend the member opposite for bringing attention to it.

In essence, this bill amends section 39.1 of the Highway Traffic Act and calls for increased penalties for the offence of picking up and transporting a passenger for compensation without the proper licence. In addition to increased fines, the bill adds three demerit points to the penalty and provides an officer with the ability to suspend a driver's licence and impound a vehicle for those charged with two such violations within five years.

I can sympathize with the member opposite, as I know bandit taxis are an issue in his riding. One of my fellow caucus mates, as the member opposite just recently

announced, the member for Nepean–Carleton, also introduced similar legislation to combat this issue in Ottawa. While I do support the intention to deal with bandit taxis, I would like to take a few minutes to highlight a couple of issues with Bill 53 specifically.

First, Bill 53 increases the penalties to a section of the HTA that I believe is worded too broadly. It seems that the wording is so broad that anybody who transports a family member or a friend and accepts gas money violates section 39 of the HTA, an issue that I feel we need to address before we go too far down this road.

Secondly, giving officers the ability to impound vehicles for a second offence is a potential Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms violation. In fact, your own Premier thinks so as well. In a letter addressing municipal requests for vehicle impoundments, sent from then-Minister of Transportation Kathleen Wynne to the city clerk and solicitor of Ottawa, she stated:

“With respect to the city’s request that the province grant municipalities authority to impound vehicles known to be operating as bandit cabs.... Government legal counsel has advised that legislative amendments under the Highway Traffic Act to allow for vehicle impoundments to combat illegal taxis are not a viable solution. There exists the potential for violating the illegal search-and-seizure provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

Lastly, not only do I believe that Bill 53 fails to effectively deal with bandit taxis, but it also has the potential to limit the ability for innovative transportation network companies, such as Uber, to operate here in the province of Ontario.

For those who don't know, transportation network companies use smart phone technology to connect drivers, using their personal vehicles, with passengers in need of a ride. This practice, known as ride-sharing, has become very popular in numerous cities around the world, and especially here in Toronto.

While I appreciate the member opposite's suggestion that this bill will combat bandit taxis, it is hard to deny the potential effect in entrenching a competitive advantage held by traditional taxi companies from these new ride-sharing companies. On the day this bill went to first reading, for example, the Ottawa Citizen released an article: “Ottawa South MPP John Fraser Introduces Anti-Uber bill.” CTV News stated that, “Ottawa South Liberal MPP John Fraser introduced a private member's bill that would provide municipalities more enforcement tools to crack down on illegal cabs including Uber.” Clearly, this private member's bill may target transportation network companies like Uber.

Ride-sharing is an issue being debated around the world, as governments struggle to regulate this new technology. That's why I'm glad the member from Ottawa South has given us the opportunity to highlight the need to update our laws to accommodate innovative transportation network companies. In fact, I have used Uber many times, and I've always been very pleased with the service. While the benefits of ride-sharing technology are

clear to me, there are many out there who are still very skeptical.

Critics suggest that ride-sharing companies are a threat to public safety. They argue that registered taxi companies, due to government regulation, are safer than transportation network companies. However, Uber, for example, has demonstrated that even without government legislation, it is able to develop high safety standards. On top of the standard criminal background check, Uber drivers must provide a local police record check, as well. For sexual offences, DUIs or serious traffic violations, Uber drivers must provide all records, while taxis are limited to just the past five years. As well, Uber drivers are covered by a \$5-million insurance policy.

Further, Speaker, the quality of the drivers is enforced through user feedback. Riders are able to provide anonymous, real-time feedback on driver performance. This is an excellent system, as problems with drivers are identified immediately. It also incentivizes drivers to maintain a high level of service, since only drivers with high feedback ratings are able to participate in the ride-sharing network.

Again, my concern with today's bill is that it may be too wide a swing, when we intend to target bandit taxis and the series of issues surrounding them. Let me be clear: Bandit taxis with no background checks and insurance guarantees, and further concerns surrounding criminal issues like theft or sexual assault, do require attention. But while Bill 53 is touted to target bandit taxis, it could also target ride-sharing transportation network companies, and I submit that ride-sharing transportation network companies, in my experience, are not bandit taxis.

Ride-sharing technology means that there are no anonymous pickups. When you are hailing a taxi, there is no record of you being in that car, other than a potential credit card receipt. However, with ride-sharing technology, there is a digital footprint of your travel. The identity of your driver and where you are picked up and dropped off are all recorded.

Ride-sharing also removes the need for a cash transaction. When you leave the vehicle, an electronic payment is made from your account, and the driver is automatically paid. This improves customer experience and allows drivers to avoid the issue of fare jumping, where passengers exit the cab without paying.

I would also point out that, in terms of potential economic benefits, ride-sharing presents a unique opportunity to many car owners. Oftentimes, when people purchase a personal vehicle, it sits idle for the majority of the time. Ride-sharing allows vehicle owners the opportunity to make better use of the asset they already own. Given the flexible nature of ride-sharing networking, many are able to make extra money in their free time to supplement their income.

Transportation network companies have also developed what I believe to be a fair pricing system. Based on free market principles, ride-sharing companies operate on a dynamic pricing model where prices are high when

demand for drivers is also high, and prices are low when demand is low. While surge pricing can be an issue, riders have the choice of whether to accept or reject the higher prices and can even be notified when the rates return to normal.

1400

It is not only the consumer who benefits from ride-sharing, but governments as well, since it has the potential to reduce congestion and pollution in cities by increasing multiple occupancy rides and taking cars off the road.

Again, while I've just read through a long list of ride-sharing benefits that are attracting consumers across the globe, there are many detractors. That's why I feel it's important that we, as legislators, make sure we get this right when we step into rules, regulations and penalties surrounding these concerns. That's also why I feel we must ensure that when we are properly addressing bandit taxis, we don't use such a wide brush that we paint all ride-sharing transportation network providers into a corner as well.

Numerous jurisdictions have already embraced this new technology. In fact, Illinois recently tabled a bill that puts regulations on transportation network companies. The Transportation Network Providers Act sets a limit on the minimum amount of liability insurance for drivers, and ensures that drivers do not have significant driving infractions, have not been convicted of a crime in the past seven years, and are not listed on the National Sex Offender Public Registry database. It also compels transportation network companies to create a non-discrimination policy and a zero tolerance policy on the use of drugs or alcohol whereby the company will immediately suspend the driver's access to their digital platform and conduct an investigation into the reported incident. There are also regulations on how the transportation network companies charge their customers through their digital networks.

I think the Illinois example bears review and consideration. I would hope that part of the effect of the conversation we are having today is that we have more consideration of how we properly address transportation network providers. Consumers are driving this change, and government's responsibility is to modernize its laws to reflect the true progressive nature of its jurisdiction or province, like here in Ontario.

As I said earlier, I am very sympathetic to the member opposite's desire to combat bandit taxis; however, I do not believe, for the reasons that I mentioned previously, that transportation network company drivers fit the definition of bandit taxis.

Above all, I believe that this bill highlights the need to update our laws. Our entire economic system is based on the principle of competition. If taxicab companies want to develop software applications to compete with transportation network companies, they are free to do so. In fact, all three major taxi companies in my region of Waterloo have developed such apps. I believe that it is not the government's job to decide which technologies or companies thrive or fail.

To be clear, it is the consumer that is driving the expansion of transportation options, like Uber, that utilize advances in technology to provide a service that quite evidently people want. Ultimately, I cannot support a bill that I believe will not achieve its stated goal and may force new and innovative companies from Ontario. I believe it's important that, rather than turning our backs on an emerging reality, we have the conversations and work with transportation network companies like Uber to better ensure passenger safety and compliance with government regulation.

I appreciate the opportunity today to speak to Bill 53. I applaud the member for bringing forward his suggestions to deal with an issue, perhaps, in his community of Ottawa. But I also think there is an extreme need that we modernize our laws to reflect the reality of what's happening out there today and to reflect this consumer demand here in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my privilege, as always, to rise in this Legislature and speak to today's Bill 53, which is an Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization, also known as the Protecting Passenger Safety Act.

I would applaud the member from Ottawa South for bringing this forward, because certainly any opportunity that I have to talk about safety and regulation to protect Ontarians is an opportunity that I appreciate.

This particular bill, if we take a moment to look at what's in it, would increase the fines for drivers who transport passengers for a fee without legal authorization, which is contrary to the Highway Traffic Act. Also, it would increase the minimum fine from \$300 to \$500, and the maximum fine would increase from \$20,000 to \$30,000. This would affect the number of demerit points that the driver would be subject to, and there are also provisions for licence suspension and vehicle impoundment for repeat offenders.

The issues with this bill are in respect of consumer safety, privacy and labour laws and not any particular company or specific technology. This isn't about new technology versus old technology; it's about respecting safety, privacy and labour laws that protect passengers and drivers, those who would use the service and those who would drive next to someone using the service.

We believe in sensible regulation. This isn't the Wild West. These are our roads in our province, and sensible regulations are good for everyone. They uphold labour standards and consumer rights. They protect passenger and driver safety, and those sensible regulations ensure that taxi systems can function without constant conflict and chaos.

We do recognize that smart technology, mobile technology—mobile taxi apps—have enormous potential, and we should embrace that and welcome that. But we shouldn't cling to outdated rules that don't serve a valid purpose and that hold progress back.

Talking about progress, I'm reminded of a time when I was first in university. I remember not having too much money to afford the trips back and forth from home to school or visiting friends. I remember standing in front of that ride-share board in the university commons and trying to connect with someone else going the same way that I was and trying to find a ride. There's some inherent risk in that, and, as a student, sometimes you think you're invincible. You just assume that if someone posts an ad they must be someone just like you looking for a way to get home. We trusted that system, for better or for worse, and paid 20 bucks for gas or whatever, and you'd get home and we didn't think anything about it.

I think, in our society, we recognize that there are inherent risks in many of our systems. That wasn't a system that would necessarily require regulation, but that, back then, would have been the cutting-edge technology when it came to coordinating rides.

I had the opportunity, in my fine riding of Oshawa—we're home to the Spark Centre for Fuel Innovation, which is a fantastic place where ideas can spring forth and become real. One of those entrepreneurial ideas is for a company called Blancride. It's an app that coordinates individuals who say, "Hey, are you going my way?" It is a ride-sharing, carpooling—it's innovative. It's a system that we might be familiar with, but it's filling a need, and we do recognize that there is a need for people to coordinate, for things to be convenient. That's the world that we live in. We live in a technological society. We live in a society that wants convenience and wants great customer service immediately. Some of these innovative ideas are really worth embracing. However, we can't just throw caution to the wind, which brings us back to this bill.

As a female, I have travelled independently around this fair city and many others. I appreciate knowing that, whatever mode of transportation I'm taking, if it's a taxi or a ride with friends, I'm as safe as I can be on our roads. Our taxis currently are licensed. What that means is that I know that the driver has been screened, has been vetted, and I trust that.

A bandit cab makes me, on a personal level, quite nervous. I don't have any guarantees, and, as a consumer, I would like to have those guarantees. So when it comes to regulations and ensuring safety, I don't think that we can be too cautious.

1410

As I said, we support new technology and advancement, but we support safety and licensing and regulation of what is a blossoming industry.

Some of the issues surrounding insurance—that's something that we could talk about. I know, when I step into a licensed taxicab, that there is taxi driver insurance. However, if I'm stepping into an unregulated vehicle, I have no guarantees about that insurance.

I've got something to read from the Toronto Star. It's from an article: "Crash Leaves Toronto UberX Driver Confused About Insurance."

"Looking to make extra cash for a house down payment last fall, Waita Sindi became an UberX driver,

using his own car to pick up and deliver strangers to their destinations around Toronto....

"Last month, Sindi was cruising along Islington Ave. with three passengers when another motorist making a left-hand turn crashed into his 2005 Toyota Prius. Nobody was hurt.

"He notified Uber and 'right away my app stopped working.' A week after the accident, Sindi says, the only thing he received from the company was an emailed form asking for details about the crash.

"You're kind of left wondering: What am I supposed to do, who am I supposed to contact, there's no phone numbers—standard stuff, as you would with an insurance claim," he said in an interview....

"But the experience was stressful and left him with a lot of 'what ifs'....

"The Insurance Bureau of Canada has warned people to be careful if they are using their vehicle as a cab but without commercial insurance."

That's on the driver side. If something, heaven forbid, happens and someone is killed in an accident, then what? If the insurance policy is "cross your fingers," that's unacceptable on our roads.

I've got lots of thoughts on this. Just let me find them.

We had introduced Uber into this conversation. Uber also believes it isn't responsible for passenger safety. Uber Canada's customers must—no, hold on.

Let's go back to this: In April 2014, Uber introduced a safe-ride fee, which was adding \$1 to the fare to compensate Uber for the costs of performing background checks. This comes back to that passenger safety. Stepping into a vehicle that's going to safely transport me from point A to point B, I would like to know who is driving, or know that that individual has been vetted, has been screened.

However, Uber has been lobbying governments to demand that background check regulations be weakened. That's not the direction that we need to be going. We need to be going in a cautious direction.

As I said, customer-focused, convenience—this is the world that we live in, and we want to allow these technologies and innovative industries to grow, but we cannot throw caution to the wind, especially when we're talking about safety.

I think I will leave it at that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm honoured to speak on this bill, in my capacity as the member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa Centre.

Let me, first of all, thank my good friend and colleague the MPP for Ottawa South for championing and working on a very important issue. What he has put forward, through Bill 53, Protecting Passenger Safety Act—he has hit upon an issue that is extremely serious in our communities, and particularly in Ottawa.

Of course, I can speak more from an Ottawa perspective because that's my home, where we are finding some serious incidents for some time. This is not a new phenomenon. This is not just happening a couple of years or

a year ago. This has been happening for some years, issues around bandit taxis, individuals who have their cars and are using them to transport people from one place to another for a fare, without any proper licence, without any proper security check and really, at the end of the day, preying on the vulnerable, primarily women, in many instances.

In the case of Ottawa, in the ByWard Market, we have heard of many instances where women have been endangered because of these bandit taxis.

This is an issue around public safety. This is an issue around road safety. This is an issue around making sure that our citizens—our duty is to protect them—are afforded the opportunity to be safe.

In many instances, we hail a taxi—all of us have probably used a taxi at some point—because we want to get from place A to place B in a safe manner. We have an element of trust when we get into that taxi, because we know there are clear markings, regulation around that taxi, and predictability around the fare and around the journey. Because we feel, for whatever reason, that when we may be out and have had one or two extra drinks and we should not be driving, which is a very important thing, and we encourage people to take taxis, or because of any other convenience factor—we need to make sure that when people get into taxis there is safety and security around that.

Unfortunately, we have had several instances in Ottawa—I stress, Speaker, that this is going back several years in our city—where people, primarily women, have been assaulted because they took a bandit taxi and didn't know the difference, or people have been charged way more than what they had intended to pay, which obviously jeopardized the safety of those individuals. There have been issues around other criminal activities around these bandit taxis as well. I think that what my colleague and friend the MPP from Ottawa South is able to do is provide a really practical solution to deal with it.

The challenge is that right now the penalties that exist under the Highway Traffic Act are just designated as a mere cost of doing business. They are not sufficient. We need to make sure that that kind of illegal activity is properly targeted.

What this bill is proposing to do is increase fines to \$500 to \$30,000 per offence and add three demerit points, and also impose a 30-day licence suspension or vehicle impoundment for reoffenders. It's a tangible way of ensuring that we stop this illegal activity and, most importantly, protect passengers who may take taxis for a variety of reasons.

I always remind people: You would never hitchhike. We always talk about never hitchhiking because of safety concerns. A lot of times, bandit taxis are almost a proposition of hitchhiking. We won't do it in one instance; why would we allow it in any other instance?

My time is limited. I just want to thank the member from Ottawa South for his advocacy on this work. I think he has brought forward a practical bill. It will definitely help my community of Ottawa Centre in a significant

way in making sure that we protect passengers and our citizens. I urge all members to support Bill 53.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Just to weigh in on this for the few minutes that are left, we certainly had some discussion when we met to talk about this bill in our caucus. We wanted to actually ensure that this bill, as it goes through the committee process, isn't going to impact areas like volunteers for Cancer Care Ontario or volunteers for other kinds of agencies that provide travel support for patients who need to travel outside of their community or perhaps do not have any form of public transportation to get to those. Many of these volunteers receive remuneration to pay for their gas and their mileage, and we want to ensure that those services are still available in our communities.

The other issue that came up was students in rural and remote communities where they have to travel fairly long distances to get to university or college. One person has a car, and five kids throw him some money for gas. We want to ensure that there is an exemption for that kind of thing.

In my own community, certainly with the government allowing more and more privatization in health care, I know that as a regional councillor and a city councillor over the years, there were people at my council wanting to get into seniors' programs where they're driving seniors to the grocery store or to a medical appointment, and not wanting to pay that \$2,500 fee that's charged for them to be registered to actually carry passengers. I think it's something that we need to make sure doesn't slip in as part of this bill.

1420

The last piece that I wanted to speak to, as the labour critic, is the fact that with Uber—I know this bill isn't just about Uber, but it's about Uber and like kinds of businesses where people don't have the proper licensing or the proper insurance. But, in many cases, the people working for these companies barely make the minimum wage—although there are claims from these types of companies that their drivers, in New York, for example, make \$90,000 a year—and that these companies, because they're not registered, they're not licensed, they can fire their drivers without cause. There's evidence that this has happened; we've seen some articles in magazines about this.

We also need to be concerned that Uber drivers can have their personal information exposed to passengers, just as if they were in a regular taxicab.

Those are my comments. I've run out of time, but we'll certainly be supporting bringing the bill to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It does give me great pleasure to speak on behalf of my friend the member from Ottawa South's bill, the Protecting Passenger Safety Act.

For me, this bill is about safety, and I applaud you for bringing it forward—but it's safety in the context of oversight. We've had great discussion from the member

from Kitchener–Conestoga about the importance of and how the new technologies can be effective in making taxi services more affordable, more accessible and, in fact, safer in so many ways.

I think what's key in the discussion is the notion of what Uber is all about. If we think of what “über” actually means, it's German for “over,” as in oversight; or, as you may remember from Thus Spoke Zarathustra—Nietzsche's great treatise—we had the “Übermensch”, which roughly translates into “superman,” but it's really more of “overman.”

What we lack in so many of these situations with Uber is proper government oversight. What we're trying to do here is level the playing field, so that people who are getting into a cab on the street—we're trying to find enforcement for a regulated activity that isn't being fully enforced, a regulated activity which puts other drivers on an unlevel playing field. You know that these drivers are out there, and they're undercutting the marketplace because they're not putting in place proper licences, proper insurance and proper oversight.

I know in Toronto—I can't speak to the situation in Ottawa—what allows them to be able to do the same job cheaper is that it has so much to do with the costs of licences. We've created a scenario—a supply-managed system, in effect—where people have bought licences which makes the cost of taxi services so much higher. Until we figure out how to compensate people who invested their life savings in licences—in order to open up competition, people can undercut significant amounts of money by not paying insurance, not paying licences and not having proper oversight.

Although Uber can function using existing licensed drivers, it also operates with its own drivers. As we've heard from the member from—where is she from?

Ms. Soo Wong: Oshawa.

Mr. Arthur Potts:—Oshawa, she can't always be certain that person has entered into the proper oversight considerations.

I would urge all members to support the bill. It's an important bill for levelling the playing field for taxi services so that it can be provided in an equal way across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to support my colleague from Ottawa South on this particular safety bill.

I heard, tentatively, during this whole debate, this issue of what they call illegal taxis, bandit cabs or ride-sharing services—call it whatever, Mr. Speaker, this is about public safety. That's number one. I want to applaud the member from Ottawa South for bringing this piece of legislation, because this is a long-standing, serious issue affecting municipalities across Ontario.

I want to share with the members here and those watching this debate today: On the actual website of the city of Toronto—they have actually stated on their website that, “Based on the information currently” provided, “the city is concerned that the UberX service may

pose serious safety risks to the public....” Now, why would the largest municipality in the province, in the country, put in that kind of statement if they don’t have the facts? That’s the first statement, Mr. Speaker.

The other piece here is that, recently, the Toronto police made at least 22 charges after a week-long undercover sting operation on unlicensed taxicabs—just one week on this concern about unlicensed taxicabs.

The other piece here is, we heard from our colleague from Oshawa of her express concerns dealing with the issue of safety as a woman getting in as a passenger. My other concern—as a former school board trustee with the Toronto District School Board, every day we put students into cabs. It is the responsibility of the school board, the principal and everyone involved to make sure the cab has proper licensing and that the taxi transporting the young person has proper mechanical inspections. So we’re going to go in potentially virgin territory, making sure the public is protected.

The other thing is, recently, city councillor Gord Perks wrote in the *Globe and Mail* identifying eight reasons why Toronto should not push for this kind of illegal taxi or bandit taxi. The number one concern he identified is the insurance issue. He listed a potential lawsuit in a case where, in San Francisco, a truck driver killed a child using Uber. The other piece he complained and wrote about in the article is driver screening, making sure about the background check of the driver.

The other thing, in his article in the *Globe and Mail*, Councillor Perks talked about is customer safety, because in the city of Toronto, the licensing body has a right to revoke or grant licences. When you have these kinds of drivers out there that are not properly licensed, not properly screened, you’re potentially putting every passenger—whether taking a ride in Scarborough, my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, or those taking a ride in Etobicoke.

At the end of the day, I think what the member from Ottawa South is saying is not only increasing fines but also the penalty of three demerit points, because often that demerit point removal—taking demerit points brings compliance with the law.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak in support of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I’d like to thank the members from Kitchener–Conestoga and Oshawa, the government House leader, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, the member from Welland and the member from Beaches–East York. Thank you very much for your comments.

I would like to start by saying again that this bill does not make anything illegal that is not already illegal. So I appreciate the member from Welland’s concern. That was something I thought of when preparing this bill, so it won’t affect carpooling or charitable organizations that help people who can’t afford transportation.

To her comments on labour law, I’d like to add one more thing. There is an issue of fairness with people who

are already in the industry, following the rules, often working six, seven days a week, making a modest income, and they are disadvantaged. So there’s an issue. That’s not why I put this bill forward, but that’s an important thing for us to remember.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would have said that, but I ran out of time.

Mr. John Fraser: I appreciate that, and I know that she would.

I really appreciated the comments from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. I want to let him know, with regard to his comments in the letter from our Premier, that he would want to know that the request that the city of Ottawa made was for all bylaw officers to implement the search-and-seizure provisions. I did not include that in my bill because I did not feel the risk to improper search and seizure would be appropriate—in allowing everybody to be able to do that. Properly trained police officers to enforce the law, the Highway Traffic Act, as they do now, is the best vehicle.

The member from Nepean–Carleton made that change in her bill. He may see that. She had the change that opened up the enforcement to all bylaw officers. I didn’t think that was appropriate.

I also want to assure him this bill is not about Uber, Hailo or Lyft, or new technology versus old technology. It’s about protecting public safety. It’s about those rules that we have in place that ensure that proper drivers’ checks and proper commercial insurance are there, and municipalities regulate that. The member may also know that the city of Toronto is undergoing a review of their taxi regulations; the city of Ottawa is, with regard to these new technologies.

1430

New technology and passenger safety are not mutually exclusive. Even the Competition Bureau, which wrote a report on this very issue, said there is a need for regulation in this industry. The regulations that are most important, which I believe they are referring to, are those that protect people. We would not expect to get on a plane that did not follow all government regulations.

I thank all the members for their comments, and I would appreciate their support at vote time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members’ public business.

HOUSING SERVICES CORPORATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DES SERVICES DE LOGEMENT

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 /
Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2011 sur les

services de logement et la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to bring forward the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act. There are 165,000 families waiting for social housing in Ontario. They cannot afford to have dollars intended for affordable housing wasted or misused, but for the past few years, that's exactly what has been happening.

Until a couple of months ago, most people had never even heard of the Housing Services Corp. It was created to save social housing providers money by arranging bulk purchases of natural gas and insurance. The goal was good, but since then, it has grown from two staff and a total operating budget of \$1 million, to an organization whose staffing budget alone was \$7.5 million in 2012.

Housing Services Corp. funds their operation by marking up the cost of natural gas and insurance to social housing providers. That means that every dollar they receive is public money that was intended to build, repair or operate social housing. As the HSC has grown, it has lost sight of why it was created and of the people it was supposed to help. Today, the Housing Services Corp. is costing many social housing providers money instead of helping them save it.

This bill would create accountability in three ways: It would allow social housing providers to purchase natural gas and insurance from wherever they can get the best price, instead of being required to buy it through the HSC; it would require the HSC to report salaries over \$100,000 on the sunshine list; and it would allow the provincial auditor to audit the HSC as she deems necessary.

The 165,000 families waiting for affordable housing don't care who made the rules 12 years ago. They care about the fact that this money is being wasted now, and they want us to fix it. They are watching to make sure we take steps to help them.

This is not about the needs of a few housing providers, as some people would say. Housing Services Corp. is costing social housing providers money across Ontario: north and south, large and small. Municipalities across the province passed resolutions in support, because they know first-hand how much HSC is costing them.

We know that Toronto Community Housing could save money if they were allowed to opt out, but so could Oxford county, Hastings county, Bruce county, and Prince Edward-Lennox and Addington. Thunder Bay reported that they spent an additional \$750,000 in the last four years because they had to purchase natural gas through the HSC. CityHousing Hamilton said they could save \$1.1 million in one year. That would have provided 140 families with housing. Oxford estimates they could save enough to house an additional 25 families each year.

The Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act would give housing providers the ability to purchase

natural gas and insurance at the best price. That could be from the HSC, in partnership with their municipality through AMO's Local Authority Services or directly. Whether it is gas or insurance, we need to ensure that housing providers aren't wasting scarce resources by paying too much.

There are already 100 housing providers in Ontario paying the HSC for the right to purchase the same insurance at less cost from another company. The only way that the HSC will let these providers opt out is if they pay HSC an administrative fee of 2.5% on their insurance premiums even though HSC isn't providing them any services. That means that their insurance business isn't required to make the bulk purchasing work, as the government would have us believe. For these housing providers, passing this bill simply means that they won't have to use some of their scarce resources to pay HSC for the right to buy from another company. Think how much housing could be provided if those 100 housing providers were simply allowed to purchase their insurance from the company that could provide them the best price.

The bill doesn't eliminate the Housing Services Corp. but it does ensure that they can no longer mark up costs to the housing providers to cover huge questionable investments and luxury world travel. Every dollar that the Housing Services Corp. spends comes from a housing provider who paid above the cost of services.

That means that social housing providers paid for the over \$82,000 that the Housing Services Corp.'s CEO spent on travel, including 10 trips he took to England. That means that they paid for him to fly back to Ontario for two days to attend his mother-in-law's birthday party before he flew back to England.

That means that social housing providers paid for the over \$1 million that HSC gave Innoserv, a solar panel company. In 2008, HSC gave Innoserv a loan of \$400,000 and wrote it off in the same year as uncollectible. Most of us, after writing the first loan off as uncollectible, would have stopped giving this company money, but two years later, HSC gave them another loan. This time it was \$330,000, and again they wrote it off in the same year as uncollectible. The next year, HSC gave them another loan which again was written off as uncollectible. There are a lot of questions about these loans, and unless the auditor investigates we may never know the answers.

What we do know is that one of the directors of Innoserv is now the chief executive officer at HSC's for-profit subsidiary which manages investments for Ontario housing providers. We know that every penny of the more than \$1 million that went to Innoserv Solar came from money intended to build, repair and operate social housing.

Just like social housing dollars, the HSC invested in a company called HS 497 Ltd., whose corporate address is a lawyer's office in Manchester, England. What makes it even more odd is that there are a number of companies listed at that address, including HS 630 Ltd., HS 462 Ltd.

and HS 571 Ltd. It appears that social housing dollars may have been invested in a numbered company in a foreign country with no explanation. We know that the CEO of the HSC was then listed as a director of the company for a few years, but there is no evidence that the company ever operated.

I'd like to ask the government again: What was HS 497? Where did the housing money go? If we can't answer those questions, then I hope the government members will be supporting this bill so the auditor can get the answers for us, for the taxpayers and for the people waiting for affordable housing. The government would tell us that they are conducting a review, and I look forward to reading it. I hope and expect that they will make it public.

What they won't tell you is that the scope of the review was limited. For instance, it only goes back two years. That means it won't look at Innoserv or HS 497. It won't find out what happened and it won't look at whether there's any way to get even part of that money back to help Ontario families who need affordable housing.

The only way we can get the answers that the people of Ontario deserve is by ensuring that the Provincial Auditor can investigate. The auditor has the expertise to look into these investments, to evaluate the bulk buying and make sure that no public dollars are being wasted or abused.

The auditor's office had experience unravelling for-profit subsidiaries when they were investigating the Ornge air ambulance service. Unfortunately, there are a lot of similarities between the two organizations. Housing Services Corp. may be Ornge 2.0. That's why we need to increase accountability and we need to give the auditor the authority to investigate.

Incidentally, this is not the first corporation of this type to have oversight from the auditor. In fact, when the current Minister of Municipal Affairs was Minister of Consumer Services in 2009, he was responsible for legislation that gave the Provincial Auditor the right to audit the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. When he described the auditor's oversight on third reading, the minister said, "Transparency and accountability, straight up." I want to commend him for increasing that oversight. It was the legislation that we used to model the bill that we have here today to give the auditor oversight over the Housing Services Corp.

1440

As you know, the TSSA's structure is similar to the HSC. It's a non-profit corporation, not a government agency, and the majority of the board are not appointed by the province. But, Speaker, unlike the TSSA, which is funded by the industry, the money that the Housing Services Corp. spends is public money. It doesn't come from the private sector. It's federal, provincial and municipal tax dollars that were intended for social housing. But there's a loophole that allows HSC not to have the same level of accountability because the tax dollars go to the housing providers who then are required to pay the Housing Services Corp.

In fact, the housing providers who are forced to pay the Housing Services Corp. are public organizations required to report for the sunshine list. Ajax Municipal Housing Corp., Brantford's municipal housing corporation, Kingston and Frontenac, Cornwall and Area Housing Corp., Halton Community Housing Corp.: These all are organizations that are required to report on the sunshine list. These are the organizations that are being overcharged by the HSC so they are spending the same public money. The big difference is that at the housing organizations I listed, there wasn't one person on the list, because none of them were earning over \$100,000; not one. Today, we have an opportunity to close that loophole and make the Housing Services Corp. more accountable by requiring them to report all salaries over \$100,000.

Taxpayers depend on us making sure their money is spent wisely. Frankly, it's hard to believe some of the ways that Housing Services Corp. has spent this money. It's also hard to believe that no one noticed. But today we have an opportunity to ensure that it never happens in the future. We have an opportunity to increase accountability and transparency "straight up," as the minister said, and we have an opportunity to put the needs of 160,000 families who need affordable housing before party politics.

I hope all members will support this bill to ensure that social housing dollars go to help vulnerable people and not to the jet-setting people at the Housing Services Corp.; that they all go to house people in our public housing system. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up in support of the member from Oxford's private member's bill, Bill 74, the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act. His comments, of course, ring very true, and I think that he has a record in this House of bringing forward private member's bills that should receive support from all parties. I'm thinking of his carbon monoxide bill, which finally did pass last session.

It's true that this government has a long-standing record of trying to outsource their responsibilities, and I think that the Housing Services Corp. is probably a perfect example and one that this government should learn from. But of course the intention of the bill, and the act, subjects the Housing Services Corp. and its subsidiaries to the oversight of the Auditor General and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. Also, housing service providers will no longer be forced to participate in Housing Services Corp. programs. I think that they would welcome that relief. This is something that the clients, those who are part of public housing, have been calling for: a serious reform at the top, where the money seems to go, for a long time. So this bill is timely and it is needed.

I do think that we need some context here, just to remember our history. The Housing Services Corp. of course is a non-profit, private corporation, and it was

originally created as the Social Housing Services Corp. by the Tories at the same time that they effectively killed the Ontario Housing Corp. and downloaded social housing onto municipal service managers. That is the history. So I kind of see this as a way of correcting that wrong: to at least put the oversight, which is desperately needed, into this stand-alone agency.

But that is the problem: This is not truly a crown agency, and therefore it's not subject to the normal oversight of the Legislative Assembly, the Ontario Ombudsman or the Auditor General, and that is needed. One would have thought that that would have been built in at the very time, but if it's arm's-length and it's over there and it is doing what it wants to do, then it is very easy for the government to sort of leave their own responsibility out of it.

Today, of course, the talk is, everyone wants to apply for the beer ombudsman in the province of Ontario, given the announcement this morning. That's what all the interviews—there are a lot of people out there who would like to be in charge of beer in the province of Ontario; I can tell you that much.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's like winning the lottery.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's right.

We are also standing in this place right now because of a long-standing Liberal record, which is not a very good record, on housing. One has to remember that in the 2007 budget, the Liberal government announced that "the province will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded under the program." However, in 2008, the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review around the municipal uploading agreement did not announce an uploading of social housing costs. They forgot that part.

In 2010, the government's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy said it was "short-sighted" for the Harris government to download housing programs onto municipalities. Many municipalities had expected that social housing costs would be uploaded eventually.

In 2012, the provincial government eliminated the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit, the CSUMB, and folded it into a new program called the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. We call it CHPI. The effects of this change in 2012 are still being felt in our communities, because CSUMB was a fund that was used in particular by women who were fleeing family violence, domestic violence. This allowed them to actually get to a safe place with their children. We've been trying to get this reinstated for quite some time. But the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, CHPI, was started up with less funding. Funding for municipalities under the CHPI is capped, and it's not demand-based, and that's a really important piece. So it's not responsive to the actual needs of housing or needs around homelessness. Unlike the CSUMB, CHPI benefits are discretionary, and people cannot appeal a denial of benefits to the Social Benefits Tribunal, so they have no recourse. There is truly no accountability.

The government recently announced a two-year funding freeze of CHPI, and the Star actually reported this as

"good news," because the government cynically announced the freeze as if it was new money, something we're seeing often in this House. That is quite sad, because housing is that base that you rebuild an economy from. As I mentioned, it has social value and economic value to the broader community.

In 2013, the Wynne government announced the cancellation of the Toronto pooling compensation, which helped the city of Toronto pay for part of its disproportionate social housing burden. This completed the 100% downloading of social housing programs onto municipalities. This cut left an \$86-million hole in Toronto's budget in 2015, rising to \$129 million next year. Next year, the provincial government will contribute less funding for Toronto's housing and homelessness programs than the Harper government, completing the theme of the hard-right turn at Queen's Park.

We have actually proposed several progressive and positive solutions to the social housing crisis, such as inclusionary zoning and equal rent protections for all tenants. These have firmly been shut down by this government.

There are so many examples to list, actually, as to why this financial and Auditor General oversight is needed.

I'll just leave you with one most recent one. Last November, just a few short months ago, Housing Minister Ted McMeekin wrote to the agency to demand answers after learning that former HSC CEO Lindsey Reed was paid \$262,000 in 2013 for severance, unused vacation time and salary for the four months she worked in that year. After leaving, she continued to work for the agency as a special adviser for HSC, earning nearly \$52,000.

Boy, you know, where are all these jobs, and how do I get one? It's unbelievable. There are so many examples of incompetence.

I want to let my colleagues weigh in on this issue, but we will be supporting this private member's bill. We commend the member for bringing it forward.

It is high time that this agency, the Housing Services Corp., has the financial oversight to make sure that it operates in the best needs of the clients and not the people who are running that organization.

1450

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to Bill 74, the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act. I want to thank the member from Oxford for a sincere and well-intentioned private member's bill that wants to address some issues that I think all members of the Legislature have about the way this corporation has managed itself.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo also gave a good summary of sort of the inception of the HSC and how, perhaps, some of what we're now looking at has occurred.

This corporation, though, is an independent non-profit corporation. It is not directly funded by the province of Ontario. It does not receive provincial funding. That is

one of the reasons why it is not subject to the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act that we already have—and also the board of directors of this corporation, the majority of which are not appointed by the province. It was set up to be quite arm's-length from the province, and that is how it's operated.

This corporation, however, does have to provide an annual report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, with audited financial statements, within 180 days of the end of its fiscal year. As part of its commitment to be more open, transparent and accountable, the corporation did ask the ministry to help facilitate an independent third-party review of itself and its subsidiaries. That was selected through a competitive process.

This review is under way, and it's expected that it will be completed later this spring. As we've heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs in this House on several occasions now, the minister is very committed to seeing that review through, and he's awaiting the results of that review.

There have been some steps taken to ensure the accountability and transparency of this organization and how its funds are being utilized. The member from Oxford raised concerns over this exclusion from the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, and I think they're very legitimate concerns. An agency, whether it's directly under the control of the province, but nonetheless an agency that does provide services to the public—there is cause to want there to be openness and transparency, and for the public to realize how that organization is managed, what kinds of salaries the senior staff there have and whether there is value for money for what is paid for. So there is no argument from me or, I think, from anybody on this side of the House that the concerns that the member from Oxford raises aren't reasonable ones to have and which we may well need to address.

But the public policy purpose of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act is to deal with those agencies, those ministries, those organizations that are directly related to the province, and this is not one of them. I think there are steps being taken to increase the transparency there.

As I've said, we await the results of the review that is being undertaken this spring. I'll be supporting this bill today, but in the future, I'll be anxiously awaiting the results of that review so that we know what further steps we should be taking.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate today on Bill 74, the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act.

I think it's necessary to do a bit of a timeline here to understand what the original situation was, how we got to where we are today and the need for some legislative scrutiny.

The notion of this organization was based on the advantages of bulk purchasing for both gas and insurance services. At the time when it was set up it had two

employees. It gives you a sense of what the expectation was in terms of how their job could be completed appropriately in that kind of environment. If we fast-forward to today, it's a very different picture. What we see is a complete lack of oversight and what could go wrong with the simple idea of the benefits of bulk purchasing, which, quite frankly, is something that many of us are aware of in our own daily lives, and certainly in commercial activity as well. When we come to today we see an entirely different picture: We have a CEO who became the CEO in 2013 after having had a combined salary of \$288,000 and \$116,000; this would be Mr. Wong. And the previous CEO resigned with \$262,000. That gives you kind of a startling reaction or picture to the one where you had two employees starting out.

What this also tells us, when we drill down, is how the concept of the bulk buying, and therefore the economy of scale, has in fact gone completely the other way. I'm only going to use three examples of how it's gone the other way. When we look, for instance, at the reality, on the one side, of 165,000 people waiting for housing, we have examples of Hamilton having to pay \$1.1 million more for gas because of the manner in which this HSC operated; Peel region, \$200,000; Thunder Bay, \$750,000. Just taking Hamilton's alone would provide shelter, housing for 140 families. It gives you some idea of the manner in which these things have deteriorated, I would say, as a result of the lack of appropriate oversight.

I want to finish my comments by talking about my own riding, where I would say that the issue around housing is one that comes up frequently—people who have their own housing recognizing the urgent need for those who do not. When people see this lack of oversight—and there are many examples of further inappropriate spending practices and investment practices—it deludes them about the whole process. It makes them very cynical. It also makes them—when people say, “Oh well, it's not at arm's length,” that's legal inside baseball. All they want is the political will to create a system that works for everyone, that works for taxpayers paying the bill, that works for people who are waiting for housing.

We all have to look at how this got to be and how there has to be the political will to fix it and restore people's confidence in the integrity of our systems.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and add some comments to everything that's been shared in this chamber so far. I'm not going to go too far in depth. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo did a pretty good summary of many of the points around the Housing Services Corp. and some of the issues faced through that particular organization.

1500

Going through notes, something that has come top of mind for me—representing the riding of Windsor West, we're a very diverse community. I represent an area that has a lot of middle-income earners, middle-class families. I also have some areas that are much more affluent

neighbourhoods, and then I have a few areas that are greatly represented by low-income families, many who are immigrants who choose to come to not just this province but to make their home in Windsor. They start very humbly when they first come over.

When we're talking about social housing, we're talking about affordability. I'm going through notes, and something that stands out to me is that there's no oversight with the Housing Services Corp., and this bill set out to change that. There definitely needs to be oversight when we're talking about the use of public funds that are meant to benefit the general public, especially those who are marginalized.

I'm just looking through some notes about some of the business dealings of this particular corporation. I see that they were charging broker fees and collecting money for the corporation that way.

We had a CEO who claimed expenses of more than \$100,000 between January 2012 and September 2013. Shockingly, these expenses weren't legitimate expenses. They were for alcohol, high-end dining, and frequent travel. These are luxuries that people who access social housing—these are luxuries that they don't have access to, and it's shocking that somebody who is supposed to be running an organization, looking after the best interests of these people, is actually wasting taxpayers' dollars on things such as alcohol and personal travel, not legitimate travel.

The CEO had claimed that the wining and dining expenses were part of what was required in business hospitality—necessary in order to sign up insurance underwriters. Despite all the travel, HSC's rates were still more expensive for many housing service providers than what a municipal staffer could get by picking up the phone. Again, these were not legitimate expenses, and these were expenses that came with a very hefty price to the people this person was meant to serve.

I also notice that we had a board member who was appointed by Mayor Rob Ford here in Toronto during a shakeup of the Toronto Community Housing Corp. In 2013, it was revealed that this particular board member was receiving below-market rent from the Greenwin-Verdiroc group, a property management company that managed buildings for the TCHC. A few weeks after this was reported on CBC, this individual resigned but, in December 2014, under a new mayor, the city reappointed this particular person. Again, we have someone who is abusing the opportunity they have to take care of people who are of low income and who depend on them to look out for their best interests.

Again, I won't take too much time to speak to this. I know that the member from Oshawa has some comments as well. I think it's really important that there's oversight for these organizations that are supposed to be looking out for taxpayers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'm happy to rise today to discuss the bill introduced by my colleague across the

aisle, the member for Oxford, about the act to amend the Housing Services Act and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act.

Speaking on this bill gives me the opportunity to discuss the role of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. I'm pleased to be able to consider its purpose here today in the House, and I thank the member for introducing this bill.

The PSSDA was introduced in 1996 to increase transparency and accountability in terms of public expenditures in our province, and it does so by providing information to Ontarians about how their tax dollars are spent and how public money is allocated amongst the relatively highly paid public workers who earn over \$100,000.

This government is strongly dedicated to the assurance of transparency and accountability in how public money is spent, and it is committed to openness.

The Housing Services Corp., or HSC, was originally established under the Social Housing Reform Act, and continued under the Housing Services Act as a strategy of downloading the responsibility for social housing to municipalities. The HSC is an important part of the affordable housing strategy in this province, and has been given a mandate with an eye to creating efficiencies, keeping costs down and ensuring accessibility. Within the HSC, service managers have mandates to provide citizens in their respective municipalities with affordable housing. The service managers are also tasked with purchasing services in bulk so as to reduce the overall costs of social housing.

I understand there has been some attention to accountability within the HSC, and this, of course, is a subject that this government welcomes discussion on. The fact is that the HSC does not qualify as being subject to the sunshine list under the PSSDA; it's not one of the organizations that falls under the PSSDA.

In order to be subject to public salary disclosure under the PSSDA, the clearly outlined criteria state that: over 50% of the board or an organization must be appointed by the province; that it be a type of organization as outlined in the PSSDA, for example, a crown agency; or that it receive \$1 million or more in funding from the province within the span of one calendar year.

Speaker, the HSC simply does not meet these criteria. Only two board members out of a total of 15 are appointed by the province, it's not a crown agency and the HSC has received no funding from the province since 2011. Therefore, under our current understanding of the salaries that should be reported under the PSSDA, the HSC simply doesn't qualify at this time.

As I've said, this government is committed to transparency. This dedication extends to the HSC. The HSC is required to submit a report to the Minister of Housing after each fiscal year, and this includes audited financial statements. The Housing Services Act, 2011, included greater transparency measures within the HSC than had been previously in place. It did so by requiring the HSC annual reports to the minister to report on some salaries

and expenses. Now the HSC even publishes some of its expenses on the website.

The HSC is attempting at this time to create more transparency within the corporation. It has asked the ministry to help to carry out an independent third-party review in order to ensure that this transparency is upheld. This review is currently in process, and it would be rash, at this time, to consider amending legislation before the independent review process is complete.

I thank the member for Oxford for introducing the bill and for his devotion to accountability in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'd just like to be on record as saying that the HSC really is another Ornge; it's another private corporation, not transparent or accountable. So we're pleased to have proposed oversight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill today. As I think about this bill, I think about a couple of things.

First, I think about the importance of housing, how much work this government has done on that file and how much more work remains to be done. I remember, the first two weeks after being elected for the first time, meeting with a number of constituents. One of the constituents was a senior who had been struggling to find housing. Hearing her story, and the stories of others since, helped reinforce how important the housing issue is and how important it is that we do what we can to support those folks who need a roof over their heads. I know that this government is committed to that. I know that this government has been committed to that over the course of years and has invested significant sums of money in housing to do just that.

The other thing that I think about, when I think about this bill, is accountability. When I think about the time leading up to the election and the time since, in the interactions I have—the meetings with my constituents in Etobicoke Centre on a weekly basis—one of the issues that comes up a lot is the issue of accountability, the issue of making sure that we're spending tax dollars wisely. As someone who comes from a business background, this is one of the things I have tried to bring to government: some experience in making sure that—my previous experience was in helping companies to manage their money, to invest their money wisely, to make sure that they were getting an effective return on that money and delivering services to their customers. I've tried to bring that to government in my role on finance committee, in my role on Treasury Board and in my role in helping Minister Matthews in passing Bill 8.

1510

When I think about this particular bill, I think about what the role of the Housing Services Corp. is. It's an independent corporation; it's not a crown corporation. Therefore, it falls outside of the salary disclosure legislation that's currently in place. What we've seen is

action taken to make sure that there is a review, and the ministry is facilitating an independent third-party review of the HSC. It would be premature to act to pass this bill in light of the fact that that review is ongoing.

There are many considerations that need to be thought of when we think about how we make sure that as much money as possible goes to the people who need it, who are the people we're all trying to help: those folks who need a roof over their heads—that senior who came to see me a few weeks into my term in Etobicoke Centre. There are many, many considerations, and that review will allow those considerations to be weighed.

I guess I would also say that there were a few comments made about the government's support for and work on accountability and transparency. Having been the parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, having worked to pass Bill 8, broad-ranging legislation that increases accountability and transparency and will increase value for money in our government, I think our government has been very strong on that. We should allow the review to be completed before taking action, but I do look forward to seeing that review to make sure the value for dollar is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Mr. Yvan Baker: —and those people who need a roof over their heads have it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to thank my colleague from Oxford for bringing forth this timely piece of legislation to address the very concerning issue and costly reports regarding the Ontario Housing Services Corp.'s practice of funneling money from local housing providers under the guise of bulk insurance and natural gas purchases.

As we've heard, if passed, the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act will finally put an end to the waste and misuse of public money that was intended to build, repair and operate social housing in Ontario. We've heard the member from Oxford spell out the details of the waste and misuse of public money that has seen local providers over and over again being forced to pay higher prices for insurance and natural gas through the HSC than they would otherwise pay local providers.

Throughout Ontario, there are numerous examples of how much extra the HSC is costing our housing providers. In one year, CityHousing Hamilton reported spending \$1.1 million more for gas through the HSC. Peel region reported they paid an additional \$200,000 for gas in one year because they had to purchase it through the HSC. Thunder Bay district social services board reported that they paid an additional \$750,000 for natural gas over four years due to the HSC.

The most frustrating part of it all is that while these extra costs are adding up, there is a growing waiting list of 165,000 families and counting for social housing—unbelievable—while the providers aren't allowed to escape the HSC trap, as they are legislatively required to

play along, unless they pay the HSC a fee equal to 2.5% of their insurance premium. Where I come from, Speaker, people call that highway robbery.

We have seen this sad, sorry tale play out at Waterloo Region Housing. In fact, they paid HSC an extra \$20,000 for insurance over two years. That won't be the case this year as the region has agreed to pay the HSC opt-out fine to be able to go with its own provider. Here's the bottom line: Even with the 2.5% fee, amounting to \$10,462, including HST, even with the added cost, the region will see a savings of close to \$6,000 by escaping out from under the shadow of the HSC bulk insurance scheme. That's \$6,000 more that our local housing providers can use to help needy families get off waiting lists and into housing.

Again, we have over 165,000 families on waiting lists for social housing. I want to thank the member for Oxford for stepping in to help them with this bill that would allow social housing providers to purchase natural gas and insurance at the best price rather than being forced to purchase them through HSC.

Further, this act would allow the Provincial Auditor to investigate HSC and require it to report salaries on the sunshine list, following some concerning reports on what local providers' extra costs are paying for. Soon after learning that a former HSC CEO was paid \$265,000 for only four months of work, it was revealed that the current CEO, Howie Wong, expensed \$80,000 for international flights, hotels and meals over three years. I know those 165,000 families could have benefited from those funds being spent on housing.

So, again, this is timely legislation that I will be supporting, and I'm hopeful that government members will follow suit to ensure local housing providers can better serve their clients and that housing dollars are actually spent on housing our families that are in need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 74, the Housing Services Corporation Accountability Act, which was introduced by my good friend and colleague the member from Oxford.

Affordable housing plays a vital role in many communities across the province, as we all know how important it is to protect our most vulnerable citizens. The average wait for a rent-geared-to-income unit in Ontario is almost four years, but in some communities households can wait almost 10 years before being offered an affordable home. I know that in areas in my riding, in Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton, it's certainly over four years, but not quite 10 years.

The waiting list is quite unacceptable, but it has grown by 40,000, to 165,000 families, under this government, making it more important than ever to ensure dollars intended for affordable housing aren't wasted or misused. Sadly, this has not been the case under this government. Affordable housing providers in Ontario are required by the Housing Services Act, 2011, to buy natural gas and insurance through the Housing Services Corp. While the

goal was to create bulk purchasing discounts, the HSC is now charging housing providers much more than if they were to purchase these items directly, while also spending money on international travel, questionable contracts for board members, and giving money to for-profit companies.

I know that week after week, my colleague from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, has stood in the House and questioned the minister on a number of the scandals taking place at the Housing Services Corp. Most of them have been mentioned here today: unneeded expenses that at the end of the day have taken money away from the most vulnerable people who need to be provided housing. Just like we've seen with past scandals under this government, there's little accountability and no respect for taxpayers' money from the Housing Services Corp. All this comes at great cost to our municipalities, which need more support than ever.

I want to mention one example: The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, which represents the majority of my riding, did a direct comparison for the 2009 to 2012 time period and demonstrated that the natural gas rates per cubic metre offered by the local authority services are considerably lower—up to 21%—than those offered by HSC. So they could be saving up to 21% if they did not have this law. In Bruce county, the housing authority had to buy refrigerators, most of which were certainly used and needed service.

Bill 74 is intended to save affordable housing providers money on natural gas and insurance by removing the mandatory requirement to purchase them through the Housing Services Corp.—and for the provincial Auditor General to audit the Housing Services Corp. is a reasonable request. I hope we get all-party support on this today.

I just want to mention some municipalities that we have received support from so far for the member from Oxford's bill: the town of Rainy River, city of Owen Sound, township of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands, township of Alfred and Plantagenet, township of Faraday, township of Wainfleet, township of Hudson, city of Quinte West, township of Ryerson, municipality of North Grenville, town of Grand Valley, town of Goderich, Prescott-Russell, town of Wasaga Beach, municipality of Brooke-Alvinston, North Middlesex, town of Erin, township of Kerns, municipality of Dutton Dunwich, township of the North Shore, township of Dawn-Euphemia, township of Wollaston, Temagami—and I'm sure there will be many more to come who will add their support to this important bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that leniency.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member from Oxford. You have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: First of all, I want to thank all my colleagues and the members who spoke to the bill for their input.

There was just the question raised by the government side about the fact that it does not qualify for the

sunshine list. I just wanted to point out, as I mentioned in my remarks earlier, that, in fact, it was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing today who made the change to the TSSA organization, which is an identical organization, and made them have to post on the sunshine list. All we're doing is copying from that bill and trying to put it in this bill, so we can do the same for this one as we did for that one.

The other thing I think is very important to understand is that it may not be provincial money they're receiving, but I keep hearing from the government how much housing money the government is sending to the housing authorities, to municipal governments. They're using that money to pay the housing authorities, so their total funding is dependent on public money, not as it is with the other organization. They should be susceptible, or apply—the auditor position should apply to that so they can audit where the provincial money is going.

Lastly, I want to say we need to keep focused on what's really important. It's not the rules that were created 12 years ago; it's the fact that there are 165,000 families in Ontario waiting for affordable housing. It's the fact that money intended to provide housing is being wasted and misused—and we've been pointing that out every day. It's the fact that, by supporting this bill and moving it to committee, we'll have a chance to stop that waste and help those 165,000 families who are waiting for housing in this province and who are watching the money being spent on airplane flights—seven times to go to England when he didn't need to go there; maybe once, but he went seven times.

It's time to stop that and provide more housing for more needy people in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES
AMENDMENT ACT (PREFERENCE
FOR VETERANS), 2015
LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS
DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
(PRÉFÉRENCE ACCORDÉE
AUX ANCIENS COMBATTANTS)

Ms. Forster moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to give preference to veterans for access to beds / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée pour accorder la préférence aux anciens combattants qui veulent avoir accès à des lits.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 87 this afternoon, the Long-Term Care Homes

Amendment Act. This bill was inspired by veterans; it's dedicated to the many veterans in my riding who have repeatedly brought this issue to my attention.

Before starting, I'd like to recognize some people in the gallery who are here to support this bill this afternoon.

First is Peter Comar, a member of Branch 4 Legion. He is 91 years young and served from 1943 to 1946 in Italy and Holland in the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, Ottawa base. He was 21 years old when he was discharged; imagine that. Thank you, Peter.

Michael Blais, the president and founder of the Canadian Veterans Advocacy association, is here today, and his friend Luis Nunez.

We also have Mike Haines, my constituency assistant, who helped on preparing this bill.

We have Emily Hewitt, an OLIP student working in my office who did tremendous work on this bill, along with Eiman Zarrag, who is my CUPE staffer.

Last, but not least, we have my friend Bob Saracino, who was really the motivator behind this bill. Bob is the former mayor and regional councillor for many years for the city of Port Colborne. In my riding, he has spent decades working tirelessly on behalf of veterans on regional issues—since 1972. He did things like reducing taxes for Legions—eventually becoming tax exempt—as well as a number of ceremonial types of things around special anniversaries of the Legions and special days for veterans. Thank you, Bob.

Applause.

Ms. Cindy Forster: To prepare for this bill, I actually wandered around the Niagara region to a number of Legions, and I'd like to recognize the people I had the opportunity to meet: Peter Gemmel, John Orchard, Peter Daniels, John Dufort, Rick Hatt, Tom Townsley, Gerry Noel—at my own Branch 4 Legion—and several other World War II veterans in their nineties at Branch 4 who would otherwise have been here except for their health. Those two, specifically, were Gabe Gallant and Nick Uskiw.

The bill has two fundamental pieces to it; it's very simple. First, it expands the current definition of "veteran" under the Long-Term Care Homes Act to ensure that priority access to long-term-care beds is provided to all veterans who need it.

Secondly, it would put an onus on all long-term-care facilities across the province to ensure that all veterans who fall under the expanded definition who need access to the beds are eligible to apply for priority access.

The existing act restricts the term "veteran" to include only those members who served in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. There are no World War I veterans left, and the numbers of World War II and Korean War veterans are dwindling. These pre-1953—the year I was born, actually—or traditional veterans, as they are often referred to, are expected to significantly decline over the next few years. As such, funding for this program is expected to cease.

It is granted that the number of these traditional veterans is expected to decline, but it's certainly not right to conclude that, as a result, funds for this program

should cease. What many don't realize is that the number of traditional veterans is expected to decrease at the same time as the number of modern-day veterans is expected to significantly increase. Surely their need for long-term care health supports is needed within our system.

Traditional veterans currently have access to priority care via the veteran priority access beds or contract beds within long-term-care facilities. These beds are funded equally by the province and the federal government. Across Ontario there are about 1,100—1,097, to be exact—that traditional veterans only may apply for when they're deemed in need of care.

At almost 90% capacity, these beds are distributed mainly across three key locations in metropolitan areas: Sunnybrook in Toronto, Parkwood in London and Perley in Ottawa. They're excellent facilities that ensure veterans are well taken care of by hundreds of staff and volunteers committed to their service. For traditional veterans who are eligible to apply, irrespective of where they are in the province, their choices are limited to leaving their community and their families to be at one of these locations. When you hear that there are beds available at Sunnybrook and there are beds available, perhaps, in Ottawa or in some other parts of the country, it's because there is no access for modern-day veterans.

This legislation would ensure that all long-term-care facilities across the province give veterans, both traditional and modern, priority access.

Secondly, the even larger injustice about these beds that my bill seeks to correct is that even if there was an empty bed in any of these facilities—which there are; we saw something recently in the Toronto Star where there are, I think, 100 beds available—modern-day veterans, even though they need these beds, are not permitted by the act, by virtue of the fact that they served after 1953; they're not eligible to actually apply to go into one of those beds. They would be forced to queue up alongside the thousands of others in the province on the wait-list for months, if not years, before finding a placement that would serve their long-term-care needs.

As of 2012, there were almost 3,000 modern-day veterans in long-term-care facilities across Ontario. Because of when they served, these veterans were not eligible for any of the contract beds at the province's three designated facilities. Even if a bed was available, there's no guarantee that it would be within a reasonable physical proximity to their communities.

1530

Is this the way to treat the brave men and women who, without hesitation and without a moment's notice, sacrificed their own for the greater good of our communities and our safety? I think not, Speaker. As legislators, we have an opportunity to do more, and it is before us today.

Why is this important? A quote by Gord Jenkins, who is the president of the NATO Veterans Organization of Canada says, "Having to join a wait-list does not acknowledge the debt of gratitude owed to those who put their lives or health in jeopardy in service of their country; nor does it acknowledge that military service

has the same effect on modern veterans" as it does on traditional veterans.

As I mentioned earlier today, the number of traditional veterans is certainly expected to decrease. As of March 2014, the number of traditional veterans in all of Canada is 98,200. According to Veterans Affairs Canada, the population of modern-day veterans is just over six times that: almost 600,000 modern-day veterans across the country, the vast majority of whom live in Ontario. The average age of a traditional veteran is approximately 85. The average age of a modern-day veteran is 56. So the need is going to get greater. If this doesn't drive home the point of the dire need for this bill, I'm not sure what will.

According to the Veterans Ombudsman, in a 2013-14 report, modern-day veterans are the long-term-care client group with the least access to health care benefits. We have an opportunity to correct this long-standing injustice in our province. We don't have the right to deal with it across the country, but hopefully this will be the first step. This Long-Term Care Homes Act narrowly decides who gets access to these priority care beds.

Gordon Moore, the Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion, is quoted as saying, "Regardless of when or where a veteran served, the government has a duty of care." Unfortunately there's disagreement about how far that duty should extend.

When it comes to supporting our veterans, we are so fond of saying that a veteran is a veteran is a veteran. I have to tell you that I read that in a Legion magazine from March and April this month. Legislatively, though, it's unfortunate that this isn't the case, and this bill actually seeks to correct this.

In closing, I'd like to remind my colleagues of all stripes in the House today that we do have a duty of care. This bill has received broad support across the province: Doug Rapelje from my riding, a seniors advocate for many years, a president of the Ontario Command, Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada; Michael Blais, who's here with us today from the Canadian Veterans Advocacy association; Chris Ecklund, who couldn't be here today, but is the president and founder of Canadian Heroes—you'll often see them driving through communities with their Canadian Heroes vehicles—and Dave Gordon, executive director of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Command.

We have a duty to ensure that all veterans who have sacrificed on our behalf are given access to the priority care that they need and rightfully deserve. The legislation before us, under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, has created classes of veterans, and that is wrong. I can tell you, Speaker, in my meeting with some modern-day veterans last week when we had constituency week—they feel that. They feel isolated. They feel different than the traditional veterans from World War II and the Korean War. You'll hear that when you go out to Remembrance Day events. You'll hear it when you attend your local Legions. They don't feel that they have the respect of government or the respect of Ontarians in the

same way that World War II and Korean War veterans did.

This is a long-standing injustice that needs to be fixed. As the former Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion has said, all veterans, regardless of when or where they served, should have priority access to long-term-care beds. Speaker, it's up to us as legislators in this province to make sure that that happens.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would advise our visitors in the gallery that I know it's a very passionate item but you can observe but you cannot participate. I would ask you to refrain from all clapping etc.

Further debate?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I rise now to speak to Bill 87, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, introduced by the member for Welland. I thank her very much for her advocacy for veterans.

I'm always pleased to stand up and speak in support of our veterans. I want to acknowledge many veterans, veteran supporters and veteran advocacy group representatives for being here today. Thank you very much.

I'm always pleased to speak in support of our veterans as well as those who are currently serving in our armed forces. That is why, Mr. Speaker, our current Long-Term Care Act does provide for priority access for many of our veterans.

But I want to speak to something more personal. A lot of what we do here, I think, reflects so much of who we are. Like many of you, I also have a connection to World War II. It's actually a very interesting connection.

My grandfather, when he was young, when he was in his teens, was very much part of the Indian nationalist freedom movement. When he was 18 or 19, he went to his own father and said that he wanted to join the Indian freedom movement. His father said, "No, I want you to study. I don't want you to join the freedom movement. Finish your education and then you can join it." My grandfather went on to become a doctor and then began to practise medicine. So he lost the opportunity—and then he got married—to be part of the Indian freedom movement.

Sometime in the 1940s, the Indian freedom leader, Mahatma Gandhi, struck a deal with the English—the British Empire—that if the Indians served in World War I or II, they might make some progression towards freedom. My grandfather actually joined the British military at that time, and served in Italy.

I just heard the member opposite, the member from Welland, speak about veteran Peter Comar, who served between 1943 and 1946 in Italy. Sir, I'm going to submit that there's a very good chance that you were in Italy at the same time that my grandfather, from a very small town in India, was serving in Italy. He was a surgeon.

There's something he told me that still resonates. He said to me, "Even though I was a surgeon in the British army, when an injured soldier came into the Red Cross hospital or makeshift camp, they did not distinguish

between Allied soldiers and a German soldier." Once they came to the physician, once they came to my grandfather, it did not make a difference. He treated them all the same.

I've always thought that that's a moment of grace in what was otherwise a very brutal business. And that's how I remember my grandfather.

Certainly I make it a point, sir, to attend every Remembrance Day in my own riding. In fact, I attend two of them: One is at the local Legion and there's also one at the Polish Community House. This is a subject that I truly, from the bottom of my heart, can relate to.

Coming back to the bill, one more time I would like to say that I really do applaud the spirit of what the member from Welland is trying to do. I really do applaud it, but our officials have looked at it. There might be an inadvertent consequence of the way the current bill is phrased. The way the bill is written, there could be a risk that Ontarians in need of a crisis placement could be outranked on the waiting list by veterans, and that could potentially endanger the health of those requiring crisis placement.

So I applaud the spirit, but perhaps there's a way to look at the bill more carefully. I'm very supportive of what she's trying to do but would definitely recommend that we study this bill some more.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise and voice my support for Bill 87, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act to give preference to veterans for access to long-term care beds in Ontario.

We in the PC caucus value the sacrifice and courage our veterans made in serving our country. We welcome the veterans in the House today and those across our communities, our province and our country. We will forever be in your debt and we thank you for that. We believe our veterans deserve priority access, and I again applaud the member for doing what she is doing with this bill.

Some of the challenges I have are not so much with this bill. I want to talk a little bit about, as the critic of long-term care, the government's lack of management in a lot of the areas of long-term care. I'm going to bring that up in a lot of my notes today, because I think it's important. The sad reality of having a member put in legislation to ensure that our veterans have priority is because the government has not done a good enough job on this file during their tenure.

This is about making sure that someone like—and in my community, a fellow who is pretty special and near to my heart is Arthur Haley. Arthur is a 99-year-old veteran. In fact, about two or three weeks ago I had the privilege and honour of attending a ceremony where he received a special medal from the government of France for his valour. A number of other people across our province have received that as well. It's sad to me on a day that we have to introduce legislation for this. If we were doing the proper job, we would ensure that we wouldn't have

legislation, that that would just be happening, and I'm going to focus on that.

We have almost 24,000 seniors waiting for a long-term-care bed, and our job is about ensuring that each of those people is not just another number on an Ontario long-term-care wait-list. It's about giving any of those people—and I'm not going to name names here today because there are too many to name—that service and the care to live out the remainder of their lives in dignity.

We've come to the point of legislating something that to me should be absolutely a priority from day one. I pulled out the AG's report from 2013-14. Since 2005, the number of Ontarians aged 75 has increased by 20%. The wait time has tripled from 36 days in 2004-05 to 108 days in 2013-14. That is a number that's going in the wrong direction. People 75 years of age and older will increase by another 30% between 2012 and 2021. These, as we all adoringly refer to them, are baby boomers. This is not a new revelation. We all know that we have an aging demographic coming at us. It truly is something that any government of any stripe, you would think, would have made a priority and be in a place to do that.

In 2012, the long-term-care wait-list listed that crisis clients had a wait of 94 days. I'm not certain that ever in my life I would consider the word "crisis" and equate that to 94 days. It's simply unacceptable. Moderate needs are a 10- to 14-month wait. Think of the burden on that individual who needs a long-term-care bed. Think of the burden on the family members trying to provide care, comfort and compassion to their family member or their friend or their veteran who needs that care, waiting between 94 days in a crisis situation or 10 to 14 months—over a year—having to be told, "Well, we'll get to you; we'll get to you."

This is absolutely deplorable: In 2011-12, the stats tell us, 15% of all clients—all patients on a wait-list—died before receiving long-term care. It's simply unacceptable, and I don't see a lot of change. I don't hear a lot from the government talking about this in this House, about how we're going to change and the plan that truly is in black and white to achieve better outcomes in this.

There are significant pressures on the availability of long-term care and home-care services in Ontario, because they have failed. They have not put their actions into action. They put lots of words. The minister is a wonderful person. I've had meetings with her, we've talked, but at the end of the day, I think even she has to admit this government has not lived up to the expectations where seniors' long-term-care needs are. I think she needs to be able to step up in her cabinet and ensure that this is a priority going forward. Again, we wouldn't need legislation like this if we were spending our money more appropriately, more practically and putting it where the priorities are.

We've wasted billions of dollars on gas plants. We've wasted billions of dollars on eHealth care. We've wasted millions and millions of dollars on things like Ornge, and yet we continually hear of people who, again, have 94-day crisis clients.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Bradley, how are you, sir? I may be talking on your behalf here, at some point, Mr. Bradley. I'm thinking of this for you, sir.

I say that with all due reverence—one of the longest-serving members of our great Legislature.

I have talked to many long-term stakeholders, the people who are actually operating our facilities, the people who are working in our facilities. Most importantly, the patients and the families have told me in no uncertain terms that the situation is dire and critical.

Over the 12 years of this Liberal government, the government ignored this file, in my mind. They have not made it a priority. The industry itself underwent significant changes and, as a result, is facing more complex problems than ever before. For example, residents are staying a longer time in long-term-care homes today. They average about 2.6 years, as opposed to 12 or 18 months, which used to be the norm. So, yes, there's more complexity. All the more reason we need to have those beds available when that patient needs it at the time. We can't be saying, "Ninety-four days is what your crisis wait-list is going to be, and just live with that at home and we'll get to you when we can." We can't be telling them it's 10 to 14 months for those people who have increasingly complex needs, and that "we'll get to you when we can."

The Canadian Institute for Health Information has compiled data that shows as many as 80% of long-term-care residents have a heart/circulation disease, hypertension and Alzheimer's or another related dementia. I've said in this House a number of times in my three years that Alzheimer's and dementia, to me, is another tsunami coming at us. It's something that, again, I don't believe the current government of the day is addressing nearly enough or is putting enough priority on. Again, that just puts more burden on the system overall.

Another challenge facing the sector is operational costs. Again, it's common knowledge today that after wages, for most of these facilities, the rising cost of utilities—hydro specifically—is their second-highest expense. We know where that's going. The costs have tripled and doubled. We now have the highest energy rates in the continent, and they're planned to be scheduled to increase and doubled and tripled again over the next four years. It's simply unacceptable, because if those operating costs are going up, what's getting cut is the actual care and service and the number of beds available, which are the only ways that they can turn to.

Every time you hike energy rates, that's less money going into senior care services and front-line care. It's unsustainable; it's unacceptable.

What's needed in the sector? Funding, beds and more hours of care.

There are 23,457 people on wait-lists for long-term care. That's absolutely abhorrent. There are 76,535 beds in 627 homes, and they usually only become vacated, sadly, when someone dies. We need to ensure that this is becoming an absolute priority.

The Liberals actually assigned a second minister of health, whose task is to ensure that Ontarians who require long-term care get long-term care. You may hear her talk about overachievements, but I put the challenge out to her today to truly make this an absolute priority so that we don't have to be bringing a piece of—all my respect to you, colleague and fellow member of the Legislature, but I wish you didn't have to bring this forward. This should be something that's happening without you having to bring a private member's bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government to turn their attention to this.

I thank, again, all of the veterans, both here in the crowd today and across our wonderful community, province and country, for all that they have done. We will always respect you, and we will always be in your debt. I certainly hope that we can address this so that you are the priority that you should be.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'll turn my time over to my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill—veterans and long-term care—and I thank my colleague from Welland for bringing forward this legislation.

Let me start by saying that I have an enormous respect for our nation's veterans. When discussing this bill with my colleague the MPP from Niagara Falls—he represents Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake—I discovered that his own father was a veteran. James Gates served from 1939 to 1945 in the Canadian Forces and actually ended up staying an extra year in Europe with the military.

As many in this chamber know, my riding of Windsor West has a strong history of supporting veterans. These men and women answered the call when Canada needed them. Today, when I visit legions across Windsor and Essex county, such as the Riverside Branch 255 and the Ambassador Branch 143, I am reminded of how much the people of Windsor respect their veterans and the sacrifices they made for us.

I think we need to remember that our Legions not only serve veterans from the First and Second World Wars and Korea, but include younger veterans who served during Canada's peacekeeping operations and during the mission in Afghanistan.

1550

A personal friend of mine, Bruce Moncur, is a veteran of the Afghanistan conflict, and he was seriously wounded near Kandahar city during Operation Medusa in 2006. He was wounded, and as a result suffered the loss of 5% of his brain following the injury.

We cannot have classes of veterans here in Ontario. Every man and woman who puts on the uniform deserves our respect and deserves to know their province will be there for them, as they were there for their province. Unfortunately, because of when some veterans served, they are not eligible for any of the contract beds at the province's three designated facilities. Even if a bed is

available, there is no guarantee that it is within reasonable physical proximity to their home communities.

The bill before us today seeks to remedy this. If passed, the bill would amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act by extending priority access for long-term care to modern-day veterans. This would include those serving after World Wars I and II or the Korean War. Those veterans are currently excluded under current legislative definitions. This bill also amends the Long-Term Care Homes Act to ensure that these veterans are given priority access to all long-term-care facilities in the province.

Speaker, I'd like to say this is a good bill, but instead I'm going to say that this is a great bill. It's supported by a number of veterans' organizations, including the Ontario Dominion Command, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Ontario veteran advocacy centre and local Legions across Ontario.

As New Democrats we believe that all veterans, regardless of when or where they served, should have priority access to long-term care. Unfortunately, right now this is not the case. We need to change this, and we need to start recognizing that all veterans, regardless of where or when they served, should have priority access to long-term care.

I hope all members of this chamber consider supporting this bill, and I look forward to further debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's my honour and privilege today to rise in this House and talk about Bill 87, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act (Preference for Veterans). I want to start by thanking my colleague across the aisle from Welland for her passionate advocacy. It's my pleasure to stand in this House and have a conversation on a bill that the member has brought to this place, one that's very important. I knew the member, I'm proud to say, before I was elected, and I continue to be someone who admires her greatly, her advocacy in particular, so thank you, colleague, for bringing this forward.

Of course, our veterans are so much a part of our DNA and our heart and soul in this country. I see many of them here today. We salute you. We thank you. And your family and your advocacy partners who are here, as well: We also salute you. Thank you for your years of service and dedication to our country.

The member from Welland referenced the vets in Branch 4, so I'd like to—if any of them are watching—salute the veterans in Branch 60 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Burlington, who do amazing work to honour and to continue honouring our veterans in support of their work.

As the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care alluded to—and said, in fact—we support the spirit and the intent of this legislation. I want to talk about that in a moment, but, like so many members of this House, I have a personal connection to veterans, as well.

My father, Hugh McMahon, served in the Second World War. Like one of the gentlemen here today, he

served in the Italian campaign, one of the most brutal campaigns of the Second World War. Dad came to his calling as a young man of 16. He lied about his age, in fact; I don't know how happy he'd be about me telling the House and Ontarians that, but he did, because he was keen to serve, and off he went. He got his commission at Sandhurst military academy, which at that time was a training centre for the Allied forces and, again, spent time liberating Holland at the end of the war and fought in the Italian campaign.

When Dad came back from the war, he continued to serve in the military. I'm glad that my colleague from Windsor West is here, because I grew up in Windsor; Dad was the honorary colonel of the Essex and Kent Scottish regiment in Windsor and served valiantly for many, many years in dedicated service to our military, and as a veteran himself.

He never missed a year at the cenotaph, so I try to honour that spirit as well. This year, in my own community of Burlington, like so many members, I was pleased to be at the cenotaph in Burlington. It was a very moving occasion for me, because it was the first time as an elected member to be standing in that place, resonant with all of our veterans and our community leaders, honouring their sacrifice and service and thinking of my dad and his service to our country and how much it meant to him. When I was growing up, I used to go with dad to the cenotaph in Windsor. I enjoyed those occasions; they are some of the most memorable of my young life.

So to have the opportunity to join with members of this House to thank our veterans, to speak in support of them and their valiant contributions to global peace and security, and to recognize them and talk about how much we value their contribution to our country is a welcome opportunity indeed.

Our government, on the long-term-care front, has doubled the investment in long-term-care support and beds since 2003 by 200%. That contribution is an important one, and we consider it to be an important one and we will continue to support it.

Again, I want to thank the member from Welland and say in closing that we applaud the spirit and we support the intent of this bill. I think, as the associate minister mentioned, there may be some challenges and unintended consequences with some of the language in the bill, so those things can be discussed, debated and worked out. But the fact that the member would bring a bill which seeks to really talk about our veterans and their care is something we applaud and support. Again, in spirit and intent, our support is there, Speaker.

Thank you to all the members of this House who have spoken so valiantly and importantly today of our veterans. I join them, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Diana Munro: It is with great pleasure that I'm able to join in this debate of Bill 87, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to give preference to veterans for access to beds.

A couple of opening comments in the few moments that I have: I guess one of them is the disappointment that, quite frankly, this is necessary. When it was brought to the attention of our caucus that this was the bill to be debated, I was shocked. I was shocked to think that in our country, in our province, such a bill would be necessary.

Like most of the speakers who have spoken, I, too, have recollections and certainly stories. One of my uncles was the captain of one of those convoy ships that crossed the Atlantic at great danger to themselves in the dark days before radar was in any way something that they could count on. It serves to remind all of us that you don't have to dig too deeply to find connections with veterans. And certainly I have the family of an Afghan veteran, and that certainly brought together our community in recognizing that it happens so close to home.

I want to talk about the fact that this government has chosen to look at the long-term-care home as almost secondary in its planning. When we raised the issue that there were thousands of beds that were necessary, the emphasis that the government had was, "No, it's going to be on home care." And so we get the kind of statistics that we heard from my colleague the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound of 24,000 people waiting. The fact that people can, for urgent matters, be looking at 94 days—we think 94 hours is a long time when it is something that is urgent. But it has not been at the top of the radar screen for this government.

Certainly when you look at the allocation of beds, we added 20,000 beds to the total in this province, but that was 12 years ago, and there hasn't been the same commitment in the last 12 years. So it is of crisis proportion. It's certainly something that comes to a head when you look at the people in our communities who we all agree deserve our support in this bill. We need new direction in the province for long-term-care beds. This is a demonstration of how important that initiative is.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure—a privilege—to stand and speak on this particular issue. I want to thank the member from Welland for bringing it to our attention.

Many people, I think, would be shocked that this is the state of affairs in this province. I'm a member at branch 530 in Waterloo. I was speaking to my friend Angus, who's a World War II veteran. He's 91 years young. I told him about this bill. He said, "Catherine, it should be all veterans." So it's very much on the mind of today's veterans because they're living it; it's their lived experience.

The member from Welland has received an amazing amount of support from across the province. The Royal Canadian Legion sent this—they actually put it in a news release:

"The Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Command has learned there will be legislation introduced in the Ontario

Legislature to amend the present Long-Term Care Homes Act.

“‘Presently, there are empty beds in long-term-care facilities that were designated for our veterans,’ says Legion provincial president Bruce Julian. ‘The proposed amendments in this legislation would certainly benefit veterans in the community that may not be eligible for these beds. Ontario Command fully supports the amendments to this legislation.’”

I think the point is that there are empty beds that modern-day veterans do not have access to because of language, because of the terminology in the legislation. What I would say is that this needs to change. That’s why this bill is before this House: The legislation needs to correct this long-standing wrong and injustice, as the legislation is written.

This bill needs to move quickly because there’s an urgency. It needs to be accelerated. The issues that our modern-day veterans are experiencing—everything: post-traumatic stress coming back from Afghanistan and other jurisdictions—it’s painful. They should not have to wait and be viewed as a second-class veteran. A veteran is a veteran, and this legislation will correct that.

I also have a very impressive letter here from Lieutenant General the Honourable Romeo Dallaire. This just came in, actually. He comments on this piece of legislation. It’s dated today from Ottawa. It says:

“Dear Ms. Forster, MPP Welland, Ontario,

“I am pleased to learn of the private member’s legislation that you sponsored, aiming to provide greater access to long-term-care facilities for veterans in your province.

“At a time when members of our armed forces are deployed on so many dangerous missions around the world, we must live up to the obligations of the social covenant that binds us with them in their service. The covenant calls for a lifelong commitment. This legislation is addressing a significant gap in support to veterans who need long-term care.

“Indeed, your private member’s legislation is a critical step in the right direction and an example that I hope your federal counterparts will follow so that the appropriate changes can be made federally to advance this mission.

“I wish you every success with this initiative.”

That’s Lieutenant General the Honourable Romeo Dallaire. He actually puts a little note. He says, “Well done.”

That does bring me, though, to the federal situation. This bill has come to the federal House of Commons three times. Mr. Harper and his friends have voted this legislation down three times. It is shameful. This is the federal government that also, if I may remind you, up until most recently, two months ago, was insisting that veterans who were amputees would have to prove to the government that they were still amputees every year. They’ve since changed that. Now they only have to prove that they’re still an amputee every three years.

Mr. Speaker, this is a responsibility that we bear as legislators to correct a wrong. We have the opportunity in

this House today to send a very strong signal to the federal government. This is a shared responsibility; it is. While we on this side of the House think that more can be done for long-term care for our veterans provincially, because it is a provincial responsibility, it is also a shared responsibility with the federal government. From a legislative perspective, this can be done. This loophole can be closed. We can make sure that all veterans have access to these priority beds. This should happen.

The member from Welland has done an amazing amount of research. She has listened. She has consulted. She has followed through on her responsibility as a member of provincial Parliament. Now it’s our responsibility to make sure that this bill passes, that it is accelerated, and that the appropriate funding in the legislation is changed to ensure that we honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice for us—who put themselves before others—with this public service, with this access to appropriate health care.

Obviously, the restrictive definition of “veteran” in the legislation can be changed, and I think we can work through whatever concerns the government has. I think it can happen. This private member’s bill should pass quickly, and we should correct this wrong.

Thank you very much for being here today. Let’s get this job done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 87, and thank you to the member from Welland for bringing this forward. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the veterans who are here with us this afternoon.

We are discussing issues that are very near and dear to my heart and to the hearts of many of my constituents. As you may know, 20% of my constituents consist of veterans—sorry, of seniors. I don’t know how many veterans are left, but at some point, there might well have been 20%.

Make no mistake: The provincial government puts the utmost importance on honouring our veterans, and we expect no less from the federal government. Unfortunately, for some time now, that expectation has come up considerably short.

I am glad that the member from Welland has brought this forward. I am always eager to speak in favour of examining our seniors’ care and expanding the efforts we make to ensure that those who have sacrificed for us have what they need.

With our aging population, we must be diligent in ensuring that our services reach those who need them most. As a society, we are constantly learning how services from other levels of government are failing the needs of our veterans.

I am glad to support the spirit of this bill. Providing quality care as fast as possible is something we owe to those who have served their country and this province. I do echo the concerns of my colleagues, however. As I am ever a fan of a balanced approach, I know that those who

were in critical condition and in need of care may be taken on urgently.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to Bill 87, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to give preference to veterans for access to beds. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank my colleague from Welland for introducing this bill, which amends the Long-Term Care Homes Act by extending priority access for long-term care to modern-day veterans, those serving after World Wars I and II or the Korean War, who are excluded under the current legislation.

Before I go further into it, I would also like to acknowledge and welcome our veterans and guests here today at Queen's Park. Thank you.

Each November we celebrate Remembrance Day, but the impact that our veterans have had on our daily lives is experienced all year long. Our freedoms are a product of their sacrifice; our opportunities, a mark of their defence. In return, we have an obligation to support our veterans—all veterans—in whatever ways we can. On Remembrance Day, we honour them, but today we have the opportunity to ensure that they, too, are protected.

Currently, the Long-Term Care Homes Act provides priority access to long-term-care homes to veterans of World Wars I and II and the Korean War. Bill 87 would extend that priority access to modern-day veterans who experience the same hardships but are denied the care they rightfully deserve because of a loophole.

Today, we have the opportunity to close that loophole. Today, we have the opportunity to show our veterans the respect they have shown us.

Under the current rules, our health care system has created classes of veterans. Regardless of when or where they served, they should have priority access to long-term care, and this bill will do just that.

Many veterans who want to take advantage of a priority placement must move hundreds of miles from their loved ones. This is not a choice that anyone or any family should have to make.

1610

I'd like to share that my great uncles and grandfather served proudly and are remembered fondly. My grandfather was eligible, and our family appreciated the bed he had priority access to in London, which happened to be close enough to his Kitchener home. All veterans deserve equitable consideration.

I'd also like to take the opportunity, while I have it, to share just how proud we are in Oshawa to be home to so many service clubs. We have the Ontario Regiment and armoury and the Ontario Regiment RCAC Regimental Museum, which you should visit if you have the opportunity. We have very active service clubs, including the 420 Wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, Unit 42 of the Canadian Corps Association, the Navy Club and the dynamic Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 43, with its proud pipe band, and Royal Canadian Legion

Sir William Stephenson, Branch 637, of which I am a proud Friday karaoke-singing member.

I personally value the opportunity to connect with our veterans. Our communities appreciate the involvement and leadership of our young cadets, and our province appreciates the safety and the opportunities. Our communities are grateful to our veterans. I'd like to take this opportunity to say that we should support this bill. Thank you again to the member from Welland for putting it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just have a few seconds, but I wanted to thank the member for Welland. I wanted to offer my support and ask for her help.

I represent the communities just out here. I go down to the fathers at Good Hope, and the vets I represent have post-traumatic stress disorder. My residents' association thinks these people are drunks and street-involved, and when some of them who are trained to be violent get violent, they end up becoming attacked. They're not functional enough to get into a home. The Highway of Heroes ends there, and these are some of the most forgotten young men and women. It is tragic that Veterans Affairs has abandoned them.

We need to work with the federal government and not make this a partisan issue, and get some of these young men and women ready, so that they can go. I am embarrassed when I walk down the streets of the economic capital of this country with what I see. I want to thank you, and I look forward to working with you on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Welland. You have two minutes for your response.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to start by thanking the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the members from Windsor West, Burlington, York-Simcoe, Kitchener-Waterloo, Oshawa and the Minister of the Environment.

I just want to go back to a couple of the comments. The associate minister said that there is priority access for many veterans, but in the scheme of things, 1,097 beds across the entire province with most of them being in the three metropolitan areas and really no beds anywhere else in the province other than an odd—I think it works out to half a floating bed in many municipalities, of which there are 444. When we have 600,000 modern-day veterans across Canada—almost half of those who live in Ontario—there certainly is a need to pass this legislation, and I'm prepared to work at the committee level to address your concerns.

I agree with the members of the PC Party about the lack of nursing home beds generally in the province. The wait-lists get longer and longer. Unfortunately, community care is just not enough for people to actually remain in their homes for up to three and four years without having more care provided at home or having more beds available to them.

I want to thank my guests who all came here today to support this important bill, and the people who wrote

letters of support for making that effort to attend, for making that commitment.

Lastly: to the veterans who, every day, put their minds, their bodies and their lives at risk for all of us. I think the least we can do is give them some priority access to long-term care when they need it.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to stand to correct my record. Earlier in my closing remarks to my ballot item, I referred to changes that the minister made to the TSSA and said they were related to the sunshine list, while actually the changes were to the auditor's oversight, and the same for the other part of my bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. A member is always allowed to correct his own record.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROTECTING PASSENGER SAFETY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SÉCURITÉ DES PASSAGERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Fraser has moved second reading of Bill 53, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for transporting a passenger for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j)—Mr. Fraser?

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to send the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Fraser has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed. So moved.

HOUSING SERVICES CORPORATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DES SERVICES DE LOGEMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 74, An Act

to amend the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Social policy, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be sent to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AMENDMENT ACT (PREFERENCE FOR VETERANS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE (PRÉFÉRENCE ACCORDÉE AUX ANCIENS COMBATTANTS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Forster has moved second reading of Bill 87, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to give preference to veterans for access to beds.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, sorry. My mistake. One second.

Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Ms. Forster?

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be sent to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

Now we can go to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2015 / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi

de 2015 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When this item of business was last debated, the member for Wellington–Halton Hills had the floor with time remaining. The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to continue debate on this important infrastructure bill, but I first of all want to congratulate my friend the member for Oxford on the passage of his private member's bill this afternoon for second reading and to thank the members in the House for their support. It's well deserved, the credit he has received this afternoon.

Yes, I've had the opportunity to talk about this bill—I think this is the third time now. It's a 60-minute leadoff speech. This is now, I think, the final opportunity that I will have to speak to second reading of this particular bill. But we know that the bill would enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act and would, if passed, enshrine a series of principles, requirements and authorities to promote the improvement of infrastructure planning in the province of Ontario.

1620

I have in my hands the fall economic statement document that the government presented to the House last fall. It shows, on page 123, the government's planned infrastructure expenditures for the 2014-15 fiscal year, which is the fiscal year that just concluded last month, at the end of March, and that their intention and plan was to spend \$12.3 billion on infrastructure. The government talks about a long-term infrastructure commitment in many respects and in many contexts. I know for a fact that the government is planning to spend billions of dollars on infrastructure in the province of Ontario in future years. I think we can anticipate that, no matter what happens in three years' time, the provincial government is going to have an important role to play in terms of infrastructure spending in the province of Ontario. We, of course, expect partnerships with the federal government to leverage additional federal funding to assist in these identified infrastructure needs. This bill is intended to create this long-term infrastructure plan with specific criteria and principles upon which we make these infrastructure planning decisions.

The government is going to spend this money, so I feel I have an obligation, as the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, to bring forward the infrastructure project priorities that have been identified in my riding by many of our partners, whether it be our local government, the county of Wellington; the region of Halton; our local municipalities in the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills; our hospital boards; our school boards, and so on.

I want to, first of all, mention the Groves Memorial Community Hospital project that I advocated for for many years now. I'm pleased to report that just before Christmas of last year, the Ministry of Health gave us approval for stage 2 of the new hospital project. We received the word, I think, on December 22, just before

Christmas. I was very pleased to express my appreciation publicly to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as make a phone call to the deputy minister's office to thank the deputy minister for his role. I would say again: It's exciting to see this new hospital project moving forward closer to construction. We have to continue. It's a multi-stage planning process. We continue with the planning and detailed preparation for the commencement of the construction phase, but I want to continue to highlight the need for our new hospital in this Legislature, and I appreciate the support of the government. It is our hope to ensure that the hospital is built to realize our vision of a new hospital to meet the needs of our community in the 21st century.

I am also privileged to represent the community of Georgetown in the town of Halton Hills. There was a significant renovation of the existing Georgetown Hospital; just a couple of years ago, it was completed. In fact, I pushed hard for that one as well. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville might remember the day that I brought forward a private member's resolution in this House—I know he was here—when I called upon the government to support that project. I recall his remarks. The fact is, right before the election, strangely enough, the Minister of Health came to visit Georgetown and announced a grant of up to \$2.6 million to support the building of the new emergency department of our local hospital, coinciding with the installation of the new CT scanner. This was very good news for our community right before the election. I expressed my appreciation to the minister for visiting right before the election and for her support of that project. It's an exciting improvement to the hospital services in that community, and, obviously, I'm very excited about it as well.

I continue to support health care improvements in my riding. I know that going forward there will be ideas for health care improvements, capital improvements, in Georgetown, and new equipment requirements. I will continue to do everything I can to advocate to strengthen their hospital services in Georgetown, as well as the other supportive health care services.

Mr. Speaker, you're well aware and many of the members are aware that for years now I've been advocating for the Highway 6 Morriston bypass on the Ministry of Transportation's five-year capital plan in what they call the Southern Highways Program. We know that the upcoming provincial budget is coming soon, in the next few days. The process, of course, is that once the capital allocation is determined for the Ministry of Transportation, the ministry staff look again at the five-year plan for new highway construction in the Southern Highways Program. I have raised this many, many times with successive Ministers of Transportation in every way that is possible. We know that the Premier, a former Minister of Transportation herself in this Legislature, last summer publicly acknowledged that the project was a priority, in response to a question from my colleague the Leader of the Opposition, which was interesting. Obviously, if the Premier, as a former Minister of Transportation, thinks

that it should be a priority—and that's what she said in the House; it's on Hansard—surely, hopefully, the Minister of Transportation would want to ensure that her credibility is maintained on this specific issue.

The Morriston Bypass Coalition has made a trip to Queen's Park on a number of occasions. They comprise a number of groups and individuals, including the township of Puslinch, the county of Wellington, the cities of Guelph and Hamilton, both the Guelph and Hamilton chambers of commerce, as well as prominent businesses such as Tim Hortons, Maple Leaf Foods—including Michael McCain—Nestlé Waters, Sleeman Breweries, Canada Bread and Cargill—all of these organizations coming together at the request of another former Minister of Transportation, Mr. Chiarelli, who urged the community to come together and develop a business case for the project. That's been done. So again, we call upon the government to include the Morriston bypass on the Southern Highways Program, the Ministry of Transportation's five-year plan for new highway construction.

Another important infrastructure project in my riding that I've talked about in this Legislature—and I'm pleased to see the member for Halton is here, because I know she agrees: We need a new courthouse in Halton. The existing courthouse was built more than 50 years ago. It's no longer adequate to meet the needs of one of the province's fastest-growing regions. We know that Milton is probably the fastest-growing community in the country and has been for a number of years. The existing facility is aged, overcrowded and inadequate in terms of security and privacy.

Our regional chair, Gary Carr—you know him, Mr. Speaker, a former Speaker of the Legislature, now regional chair—regional council, courthouse users, lawyers, judges, people who work there and all of Halton's four MPPs are behind the project. We've raised this in the Legislature. We continue to look to the minister—actually, the Attorney General, the minister responsible—to do what she can to push for this new courthouse. We believe that this should be a priority and we call upon the government to include it in the provincial budget. This would be a perfect opportunity, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, for the government to commit itself to the Halton courthouse in the upcoming provincial budget.

Next, I would mention the need for provincial support for the town of Erin's water management system. The town of Erin is perhaps the largest municipality in southern Ontario without a waste water management system. This has impacted the town's ability to attract commercial and industrial investment and is forcing ratepayers to pay increasingly higher taxes. In order to do the work that needs to be done, the town of Erin would have to move forward with a big construction project to build the sewer and water system that the community needs. The town of Erin has a population, I believe, of around 11,000 people, and in the hamlets of Hillsburgh and the old village of Erin there are around 4,500 people. For the project, I've seen estimates of up to \$68 million.

They cannot afford to do the work to install the modern sewage treatment system that they need in the town of Erin without a substantial provincial component.

We know that Infrastructure Ontario has loan programs, but I call upon the government to support the project in any way they can so as to ensure that we can move forward. The town of Erin needs the support of the provincial government, and I'm obviously very supportive of that.

I look at the Metrolinx—GO Transit issue. The very first day it was possible to do so, the day that we had the throne speech after the provincial election—you remember in the summer, I say to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt: We had the throne speech, and that day I tabled three private member's resolutions in the Legislature. They are actually the first, second and third private member's resolutions on the order paper, and one of them calls upon the government to keep its promise to provide all-day, two-way GO train service through Wellington—Halton Hills to Kitchener-Waterloo.

I know that was promised during the election campaign. I've asked a number of rhetorical questions as to when that's going to happen. I think we've heard a response—after the election, mind you—we were told it might take 10 years. I would call upon the government to expedite the keeping of that promise that they made to the people of our area, and I will continue to raise it. I have that private member's resolution tabled as a way of drawing attention to the issue, and I will continue to raise it.

1630

We need a new Holy Cross Catholic school in the community of Georgetown. This is something that I've raised with the Ministry of Education and the current Minister of Education even before the election, and I continue to do so. It was previously the Halton Catholic school board's highest priority for new school construction. I was disappointed that the minister, unfortunately, was unwilling to approve that project before the election. We continue to raise that issue.

We need a new traffic light in Rockwood, very close to the new École Harris Mill Public School.

There's a crossing that has been determined and identified by the mayor of the township of Guelph/Eramosa, Chris White, as being unsafe at Highway 7 and MacLennan and Dunbar Streets in Rockwood. I would urge the Ministry of Transportation to show support for that particular project as well.

The township of Centre Wellington has 105 bridges. It's a relatively small community in my riding. They need provincial support too.

I realize my time is up, Mr. Speaker, but I hope to have an opportunity to put more of these project ideas on the record of this Legislature, asking the government to show support for the infrastructure needs in my riding. They're going to spend the money anyway. I'll have a chance to do that at third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'll be doing our party's lead on this very shortly. But I do want to thank the member from Wellington—Halton Hills, who is certainly a champion for his riding. He referenced other areas of the province that have increasing and long-term infrastructure needs that haven't been met.

The bill before us talks about a 10-year plan moving forward to identify, categorize and prioritize our infrastructure needs, given that we have a massive national deficit of infrastructure. A large portion of that exists right here in the province of Ontario. We think that that somewhat makes sense. We certainly would want to know the vision and the priorities, going forward, of the government. But there's nothing that prohibits them from creating a 10-year plan, as it is, as a stand-alone measure of the ministry.

I will be talking about that. We'll be looking at what exactly are the mechanics of this 10-year plan. How do we ensure that all voices are heard and communities are consulted when it comes to adding or prioritizing those important infrastructure needs that the member from Halton Hills just referenced—schools, hospitals, roads and public transit systems—of which all of our communities have varying needs and all of which, I would argue, are incredibly important to our various communities?

We'll be interested to hear from the government in terms of what the process is in that 10-year plan to actually make those priorities, who actually does get to prioritize them and what are the metrics that are based on it, as well as a whole host of other things that fall under the category of the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

I want to thank the member for adding his most interesting comments to the debate. I look forward to hearing from other members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, it's been very interesting listening to the debate. I listened to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and to the member from the third party who just finished speaking. Obviously they're in support of this bill, number one. Number two: Obviously they have a list of projects in each of their ridings that they would like to see covered by the work that this bill is going to do.

The challenge then is, how do we sort out what projects to do, what projects take priority, what projects perhaps get done later or not done at all? The beauty of this legislation is that it sets out certain principles so that we all know the rules going into this business. What I would like to do is just outline the eight principles that we should all keep in mind when we're deciding whether a project—when we all have our pet projects for our respective ridings:

(1) Infrastructure planning should be done on a long-term basis.

(2) There should be a need for alignment with demographic and economic trends and fiscal plans.

(3) Promotion of economic competitiveness, productivity, job creation and training.

(4) Infrastructure planning should create opportunities to utilize innovations.

(5) Projects should be prioritized based on identified priorities and should support various other local plans.

(6) Infrastructure planning should be evidence-based and transparent;

(7) Planning should help protect the environment and improve resiliency to climate change; and

(8) Infrastructure planning and investment should ensure the provision of core public services.

If we all keep those eight principles in mind as this legislation is passed—if it's passed—we will get the infrastructure done that Ontario desperately needs. We'll get it done in a fair way and a transparent way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to commend everybody who is speaking on trying to take the politics out of long-term planning, because that's what it's really about.

The problem is that we're here for four-year terms, and too often infrastructure planning involves decades. We see too many people in the political sphere—I'm not just talking provincial, but federal, municipal and regional; we still have York region where my riding is. Too often they are focused on their political careers and their short term, and getting re-elected. They don't want to look at those projects that are decades in the making. I think that's really what the discussion should be focused on.

As the member mentioned, hospitals are a big part of the infrastructure that we hear about in our ridings. We have a Vaughan hospital that is going to be a branch of Mackenzie Health. It will be the Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital. We still haven't seen progress, in terms of the deed for the land being given to the proper authorities so they can commence getting to work on having a hospital.

It also makes me nervous, because I'm here every day that the Legislature is open, and I hear how short of funds we are, that we're basically borrowing from Peter to pay Paul at this point, that we're talking about selling Hydro One, which has basically an enormous debt. We are concerned that the government will somehow skirt paying off this debt, pass the debt on to some other government agency and take that money to pay for their past election promises.

The election promises centred on building infrastructure. We're all aware of that, and we all want infrastructure to get built. But there's only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer is paying municipal tax, they're paying provincial tax, they're paying federal tax, they're paying sales tax, they're paying gas tax, they're paying a health tax. Now they're going to pay a carbon tax. They are taxed to the limit, and we can no longer say we're going to find the money that way. So it's really about focusing on the resources we have. Stop wasting them, and let's get to work and take the politics out of infrastructure planning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

I now return to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the member for Essex, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the member for Thornhill for their responses to my brief remarks this afternoon.

Yes, I believe the minister, who talked about the principles that are enunciated in the bill—those are principles that I think we can all agree with. We might offer different suggestions about the weight each of those principles would hold in terms of the decision-making, but I think those are, by and large, good principles.

If the bill goes to committee—which I hope it will—if we have public hearings and there is additional input from the general public suggesting changes, obviously I hope the government would be open to that.

But again, as I said, I haven't been able to get through my full list of infrastructure priorities. I will continue this discussion at third reading, when we get back to third reading, assuming that the bill does go to committee and is reported back to the House.

I want to talk briefly—I only have a minute left—about the cancellation of the Connecting Link Program a couple of years ago. I know that many of the government members understand that the Connecting Link Program existed for many, many years; I think going back to 1927, when George Howard Ferguson was Premier of Ontario. It was one of the very first infrastructure partnership programs between the provincial government and municipalities.

As Ontario was building its road network across the province in the 1920s, it was seen as necessary to have the provincial government support local municipalities where provincial highways went through built-up areas. So there was this long-term partnership and an expectation that that partnership would continue, and the provincial government would support up to 90% of the cost of Connecting Link projects.

When the Connecting Link Program was scrapped, it left a whole bunch of municipalities high and dry. Of course provincial governments encouraged the municipalities to do long-term infrastructure planning. For example, the town of Halton Hills had \$9.3 million in projects for the next few years along the Connecting Link through Georgetown that they expected to be funded by the provincial government for up to 90% of the cost. This is roadwork that needs to be done. Then, all of a sudden, they were left high and dry.

1640

I realize my time is up, Mr. Speaker, and I don't want to force you to cut me off again, so I'll let it go. But at the same time, I implore the government to listen to what we have to say. I know you're going to spend the money on infrastructure projects. I urge you to look at what we need to get done in Wellington–Halton Hills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The member for Wellington–Halton Hills has inspired me. He wanted to continue to

do more, after his hour-long lead. I hope to at least touch on some of the issues here.

Speaker, if you will allow me a little bit of latitude, it's been a really interesting week here at Queen's Park.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, interesting politically, but interesting personally as well.

I just want to give a shout-out to my executive assistant. His name is Merv Richards. He's up in the office right now watching. Merv, thanks for everything this week. You certainly got me through a difficult time. I appreciate everything you do and the support and the help that you give. I know all members have constituency and legislative staff who assist them. Thank you, Merv.

Speaker, the bill is Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, and it is second reading. I did have a technical briefing from the minister's staff. It was a brief overview of some of the provisions of the bill. I understand what the intent is and the direction of the bill. Our party, as the third party, understands as well the nature of the bill, the thrust and intent.

As it is right now, we support the initial intent, because how could you not? It's a bill—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members in the chamber to be a little quieter? I'm having difficulty hearing.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They're rowdy on Thursday afternoon, Speaker. Can you blame them? I know my speech here is not as riveting as some others that we've seen, certainly today.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I wasn't here to see that, but I don't plan on bringing it to that level.

Again, the bill is Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. The bill calls for long-term life cycle infrastructure planning, and my goodness, Speaker, who doesn't want or think it's a prudent thing, especially for the province of Ontario, to do long-term, properly planned infrastructure? It's a measure of accountability, transparency and prudence that I think we owe to our constituents in the province, infrastructure being one of the most integral components of the work that we do in connecting communities and moving people, goods and services around the province in an efficient and safe way.

It is a massively complex system that requires us to be continuously evaluating how we do it and how we can do it better. Technology evolves. There are systems that come into play which allow people to move more easily, quickly and safely that we always have to keep a keen eye on. Those, ultimately, require massive investments—we know they do—because a system put into place a decade ago can become not only antiquated, but also not actually fulfill the needs of the community in which it was purported to be or placed in in the first place, so all the more reason to plan properly and plan in advance.

What we find interesting is that the government doesn't need a law, at this very moment, to be able to do long-term infrastructure planning. If they want to do

long-term infrastructure planning, they can do long-term infrastructure planning. There is nothing that prohibits them from putting forward a 10-year plan, a 20-year plan or a 50-year plan. There is nothing that prohibits you from doing that.

We understand that it's an important component of any infrastructure proposal in legislation, but let's not put too much weight on the fact that you need a bill to do that. You can certainly do it, and we would expect that you would do that.

What we believe is that the major components of this bill, Bill 6, represent a response to various concerns raised by construction stakeholders regarding the impacts of bigger, larger, more complex AFP projects or, as they are more commonly known, public-private partnerships or P3s, and the bundling of traditionally financed projects.

I'm going to spend a considerable amount of time on that. I'll get back to it, but this is what we think is the real meat and potatoes of this bill, so to speak. It is an important component for the government to address because they have created, in their infrastructure spending, planning, budgeting and execution—they have bungled a lot of P3 projects. We need to have a keen eye on whether we are actually getting value for money out of those.

Back to the long-term planning: We've seen plans come and go out of this place. We've seen long-term infrastructure plans and promises for various projects, whether they be hospitals or transit plans. In fact, we've asked for long-term transit spending plans for years. The Big Move's Next Wave is still unfunded two and a half years after it was deemed a priority project, and the Big Move's First Wave keeps getting ripped up, rewritten and delayed to suit the government's political needs of the day.

We have seen planning and what you would think would be due diligence within big infrastructure projects launched, be very well marketed, have all the political juice squeezed out of them and the political capital expended only to be delayed, cancelled and ripped up. Will this bill prohibit what has been historically happening? I'm not really sure, because if you look at some of the mechanics of the bill, it has to do with regulation. It gives the minister an enormous amount of power under regulation, which is sort of a new mandate or a new direction under this government. We typically would have had provisions of bills come before the House in a really comprehensive way to be able to actually understand how they were going to be played out and acted on. This bill gives some very vague reference to the minister and ministry being able to, by regulation, do a bunch of different things, and I will get into that.

This government still to this day makes reckless infrastructure promises like, for instance, high-speed rail—really, a fantasy project that the government claims will only cost half a billion dollars, be ready within 10 years and cost as little as \$10 a ride. Now, I've heard that promise of high-speed rail three times over three

different election cycles. The last time, they forgot to actually connect it from London to Windsor, which is one of the more important corridors because it would then tap into the United States and their network of rail, which opens your rail commuter system to a population of around 300 million people. It makes it incredibly viable, but it wouldn't if you didn't create that one vital link between London and Windsor and the border that is Detroit and Windsor.

During the 2011 election, we conveniently reminded them that they should not forget Windsor, and they threw it in there ad hoc, right at the end of the announcement: "Oh, yes, Windsor too, as well." That certainly isn't long-term, prudent infrastructure planning. That's planning on a whim and a prayer, and doing it for the sake of the politics of it. We certainly don't think that's appropriate. In fact, if this is what the bill is aiming to avoid, then it is definitely supportable. But, again, we don't really see where that might not happen again.

Perhaps the government needs a law like this to force them to take their basic responsibilities seriously and plan infrastructure competently. So we support passing this bill, moving it on to committee to hear from those experts in the construction, engineering and public transit industries to give us what their best practices are, what their ideas are. As is always the case when we move bills to committee, we hear the most prescient and beneficial information from those who are on the ground actually working within these realms. Will this law be enough to ensure that evidence-based infrastructure spending does come from the government?

1650

Last December, the Auditor General revealed that the government spent an extra \$8 billion on public-private partnerships, with absolutely no evidence that they delivered the benefits that this government claims. The government spent \$8 billion based on solely anecdotal and ideological pursuits. It does bewilder me that an amount as large as \$8 billion can simply fly out of this place without any regard.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Indifference.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It does seem indifferent. We had executives from Infrastructure Ontario testify at the finance committee, and they were indifferent as well about the fact that the Auditor General highlighted an \$8-billion value that was overspent or wasted on P3 projects. It's a component of the government's planning when it comes to infrastructure that they have been relying on more and more as they see budgetary constraints applied to the treasury and to the finances of the province.

Do they actually equal out to giving good value for money? I would submit and we would submit as New Democrats that they truly don't. We understand that they may be a vehicle to finance projects. I won't discount that they exist and I won't discount that there are some times where they may prove to be valuable, but only done in the right way under the right metrics, and we're not seeing that through the metrics that this government is using.

Again, I point to the Auditor General's report, where the rationale is given that it is a massive transfer of risk between the public sector and the province of Ontario to the private sector. We defer that risk to the private sector; they take it on. They say, "We'll build this project." There are different constructs of how they can do it: design-build, design-build-finance, design-build-finance-maintain. It depends on the size of the project, I guess, and it depends on the ability of the proponent to deliver those services. However, what we see built into the matrix of risk analysis is that it is an inflated value of, I think, around three times what it would normally be—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Five.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Five times, thank you, to my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo, who is an expert.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, no.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Unfortunately, she has had to become an expert because, as finance critic she sees those big values of dollars going out of this place, and she asks the question, "Why and how are we allowing that to happen?" We are using a risk matrix that inflates the value of that risk to the tune of a five-times multiplier.

If we are to do it under traditional models, not only are we saving on the borrowing, but that risk that is undertaken through traditional models of financing actually is something that we can control. The Auditor General says that we can even do it better. We understand the risk matrix a lot better than we did before, and we continue to learn. The expertise is in-house here, through the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Ontario. Why are we wasting money by having the private sector finance these massive projects and ultimately take that capital and those profits out of this jurisdiction? That's just one aspect of the AFP model that we have issues with.

The other issue that I referenced at the beginning here was under bundling. What's happening, Speaker, is that Infrastructure Ontario is identifying projects which, I would assume, likely will be components built into what the 10-year plan will be, so will identify projects within the next 10 years that we find to be prioritized and in need. Instead of being stand-alone projects that have a value anywhere between zero and \$50 million, the province has been bundling them to be large values of money. You're getting into \$100-million, \$200-million, \$300-million projects that really don't allow for some of our smaller firms in the province to be able to bid, because they simply don't have the resources to be able to take on those types of projects. So that leaves a very small pool of contractors and experts in the province that are able to handle that.

More so, those that do exist are typically large multi-nationals that are financed by their home jurisdictions and actually receive some support to be able to buffer and to underbid other jurisdictions. We know that this happens with many of the Spanish firms currently working on projects—definitely in my area, on the Windsor-Essex Parkway. We also know that they are contracted to do the expansion of the 407.

Speaker, it leaves a lot of our local contractors out of the loop. It doesn't allow them to apply their expertise and it also doesn't allow them to benefit from local projects, from domestic projects. Ultimately, they pay their tax base to the province to be able to build these projects. They should at least have the ability to bid on some of them and apply their expertise. I can tell you, it would be a component of our plan through infrastructure planning: domestic procurement and domestic content. That's referenced a little bit in here, but it's also quite vague in terms of what that means when the government talks about what domestic content provisions would be built into a 10-year infrastructure plan.

The bill does some specific things. It requires that all broader public sector entities must consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions related to infrastructure. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs referenced those eight provisions. We understand them. I think they're reasonable and rational. However, they are vague in their application at this point because we really don't know. This is a shell of a bill. It doesn't prescribe specific direction.

The principles include things like, first, "Take a long-term view." Yes, take a long-term view; I would expect that. That's as common sense as it could get. Imagine if you took a short-term view: You would end up building projects and, just a short term later, you would end up cancelling them. Who would ever do that? Why would you ever do that in any of your infrastructure planning? It would be irrational to build something and then cancel it at a loss. I would imagine the government is looking to avoid those types of mistakes going forward.

Second, "Decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of ... demographic and economic trends in Ontario." Of course, that's pretty common sense as well. We have trends of immigration and migration that would point to specific needs, going forward, that the government should prioritize.

The Minister of Infrastructure must periodically develop a 10-year infrastructure plan providing a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs. Each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public. Again, a 10-year infrastructure plan—nothing prohibits the minister from doing that at this very moment. In fact, they have various long-term plans that aren't necessarily province-wide, but it is a rational, reasonable approach to planning for infrastructure.

What I would like to see is a component of how they intend on paying and a dedicated stream to pay for this 10-year plan, going forward, and something that is a balanced approach that doesn't leave them scrambling for cash for infrastructure projects in the province, where they have to sell off assets, long-held public entities that deliver good value and profit to the province. We don't want to do that, as is currently taking place with the proposed sell-off of Hydro One. We would like to see a more reasonable, balanced approach. I think the province

wants to see that as well, that budgetary considerations are given, that we be truthful with our communities, that, "Given our financial status and our financial position, here is a plan going forward," not simply an ad hoc, sell-off-the-furniture-to-keep-the-house type of planning.

1700

"The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets." Criteria include whether the project fits within municipal plans. I think we've heard from our colleagues at the municipal level, through AMO, OGRA and ROMA, that they do want enhanced dialogue and planning with the province to be able to budget accordingly and to plan accordingly as well.

They also would like to have increased or enhanced access to data when it comes to the viability of some of the infrastructure projects that we currently have—lifetime, lifespan, a whole host of data that they would require that would allow them to prioritize as well. Municipalities don't necessarily have the ability that the province would have in terms of accessing and evaluating that, so I would hope that the government is able to work within that realm. It looks as though that might be the case.

"The government must require that certain numbers of apprentices be employed ... in the construction or maintenance" of infrastructure projects. The number would be prescribed in legislation. Many of my colleagues in the House know that, prior to being elected, I actually worked in the construction industry. Then I segued into the construction training industry, whereby I became the director of training for LIUNA Local 65. I was proud to develop our worker training centre, the level 1 and level 2 construction craft worker training centre, designated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The facility that we operate out of Windsor has subsequently put through—by now, it has to be hundreds of well-trained, certified, safe, competent workers through the process, many of whom started off as apprentices. I understand the pipeline specifically in infrastructure and construction when it comes to apprentices.

This one gives me cause for concern. There are some vagaries there: Simply, how many apprentices? It says that you're going to require that a certain number of apprentices be employed in the construction or maintenance of infrastructure projects. Well, there are already ratios that exist with the various trades. We've had very contentious debates in this House around the ratios and the College of Trades and the fact that now the college regulates the ratios and the parameters around training and enforces certification—all of those great things. However, what are you saying here? Are you saying that arbitrarily, through regulation, the minister can say, "Now we're going to skew the ratio"? I think that will set a pretty terrible precedent. We know that ratios, when it comes to apprentices, are contentious within various trades. If the private sector out there, which does a lot of great work in bringing on apprentices

and putting a lot of effort and resources into training them—if they see that the government is simply skewing the ratio to fit their own benefit on a certain project by using more apprentices, then it defeats the entire argument that we fought for under the College of Trades. I need to hear more about that. It's very, very vague.

We understand the importance of apprentices on projects, and definitely there would be a measure of pride knowing that the government puts a priority on bringing in young workers to build provincial, public projects. I can show you many of them that I worked on along the 401, and I point to them. I tell my kids, "Hey, Daddy built that"—along with a lot of colleagues, but I did. I know it's there and I know the work that went into it. I understand the source of pride that young workers have when they are working on these types of projects. However, I also understand the whole nature of apprenticeships in the province and that they sometimes are looked at as cheap labour and can be used as cheap labour. We do not want to go down that road to show that the government is using apprentices at a higher ratio.

I'm getting head-nods from the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, so I know that he knows and that I know that he knows, and that's a good thing.

I've got 30 minutes left on this one. Hold on to your seats. Buckle your seat belt.

The bill provides—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadi: Name him, Speaker. Name him.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What was that? I didn't hear it. Is he razzing me? It's too late in the day.

The bill provides the regulatory authority for the Minister of Infrastructure to establish regulation on almost any infrastructure issue imaginable. The minister must consult with relevant stakeholders before a regulation is made under the act—wow, what a good day to be the Minister of Infrastructure.

Let's read that again, for the sake of the viewers at home and for the sake of the members in here who might not know that this is built into the provisions of Bill 6: The bill provides the regulatory authority for the Minister of Infrastructure to establish a regulation on almost any infrastructure issue imaginable. The minister must consult with relevant stakeholders before a regulation is made under the act. Well, thank you very much for consulting with us as relevant stakeholders, but ultimately, the minister can do what he or she deems necessary, without any oversight from this House, at least, and that gives us pause for great concern.

We have seen big infrastructure projects go sideways quickly in this province. I would think that we had learned our lesson from having the ability for ministers or governments to arbitrarily change the parameters of public investment, when it comes to these massive projects.

I would say gas plants; we can look at that. Does this avoid giving the minister the ability or the option to pull another gas plant? I think it opens the door even further. I wonder why it's built in there. We have so much data and so much—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Evidence.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—evidence, and also best practices, not only from this province but from other jurisdictions, on how to do it right.

It's unimaginable that the minister would require such broad abilities to deal with things—I guess, to presumably deal with things that are outside of his or her control. I need some more information on that; I think all members do, and I think even government members do, to be able to protect ourselves, going forward.

Speaker, those relevant stakeholders really are the construction groups that operate in our province, one of them being ORBA. A number of construction groups—the CDAO, ORBA and other affiliated groups—believe there are problems with infrastructure projects that are bundled, and the recent use of alternative financing projects, as administered by IO. These organizations are not particularly ideological. They believe that these tools can be useful, but they should be used where there is significant reason to do so.

I'll point to changes that were made in British Columbia. The province of BC has had some difficulty within some of their major P3 projects, and they have taken the step to increase that threshold to be able to trigger a P3, or even to consider P3 financing, to \$100 million, whereas ours today is \$50 million. It brings in a whole host of smaller projects that, typically, historically, would have been financed traditionally through normal procurement processes. But now they're open for potentially being P3s.

We would say, let's look at the lessons of British Columbia, and increase that value to \$100 million. It does make sense when the province is not able to finance a whole host of \$100-million projects or a handful of billion-dollar projects, to look at a different model of financing. However, when we have smaller thresholds, it gives us the ability to live off a credit card, to finance these things as we know we shouldn't, to kick the can down the road in terms of who is going to pay for them. We don't think it's necessarily the most responsible thing to do, as has been highlighted by the Auditor General very, very succinctly.

1710

The bill and the regulations that will be developed as a result of its passage are part of the response and the concerns by these industry groups. Their concerns are as follows: that the project bundling can significantly reduce the ability of smaller, local firms from participating in key Ontario infrastructure projects—I think I referenced that. The bigger the project, the less the likelihood that smaller firms, that all exist and operate in our communities and are viable entities and community partners—they don't get a chance to bid on that project. It just is completely out of their reach.

We have to look at the economics of that. When you've got local firms that are long-standing firms—a lot of these are mom-and-pop operations. It's a family firm and it's hard work. These aren't start-ups. You don't see construction companies as start-ups, mostly. They are

entities that have existed for a long time. They come with a lot of great experience and great resources for our communities. What we're doing is, we're cutting them out of public expenditure. That is unfortunate because they have a lot to offer us, because they ultimately drive on the roads that they're building. They live in the communities in which the bridges are built, so they have a vested interest.

When you don't have a company that has a vested interest, when they're coming in simply because they know that at a 30% premium on a P3, they can come in, build it and leave town, never to be seen again or until the next P3 project is up for tender—it's different with smaller contractors, and we certainly understand that.

The CDAO member companies have experienced significant problems on bundling issues with things such as the holdbacks of payments on these large projects, which also makes it difficult for small firms to manage cash flow. Payments are withheld from subcontractors until the contractors get paid, and then subcontractors don't have the same ability to wait for payments. There is an inherent unfairness built into some of the P3s as well that puts added, undue pressure on smaller firms that, really, they can't handle. That's how they make their money: hard-pressure tactics and the ability to do that. It's almost a Wild West when you're a sub on one of the P3 firms, because the idea is that they're going to squeeze every dime out of you and hold back payment if they don't get it.

I understand holdbacks when there are deficiencies on projects, but for the sake of simply putting the squeeze on your subcontractors, it's really unconscionable. There is lots of anecdotal evidence out there to support what I'm saying here. We hear it everywhere. The word is out, to tell you the truth. Smaller firms don't even want to bid on these P3 projects anymore.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They can't.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They can't. First of all, they don't have the ability. They don't have the financial reserves. They have the ability to do the work; they just don't want to put up with the grief built into them. They understand that the big multinational companies are going to apply the pressure to them to make it almost not worth it. We hope that at some point, during the debate of this bill and through committee, that that issue is addressed.

Most recently, Infrastructure Ontario has handled highway projects, namely the super-projects in Windsor and Essex, the Highway 407, the Eglinton LRT. These are projects worth billions of dollars and generally attract major international builders to Ontario. The CDAO concern here is that several of the big international players, particularly those from Spain, as I referenced, are subsidized by their federal governments—so their home federal jurisdictions are subsidizing them—allowing them to bid at a lower price than Ontario-based companies.

That's what is happening. You've got large multinationals that are doing international business. They receive a handsome subsidy from their home jurisdictions

to be able to go and capitalize on these projects worldwide. Is that wrong? I don't know. We certainly don't do it here, or do we? I haven't seen it. Who are we subsidizing? I think we subsidize the Spanish firms through giving them bloated and inflated contracts to deliver our infrastructure needs. That's a measure of subsidy when you're paying more for something than you really have to. They love it. They're laughing all the way to the bank.

The CDAO is in favour of competition. They want to ensure a viable marketplace for Ontario's small and medium-sized contractors and design professionals, architects and engineers. For example, Highway 69 was put on to the IO AFP project list with the total cost of highway updates to range between \$500 million and \$1 billion. In the past, the CDAO and ORBA would have been consulted on this, but in this case they were not. So you've got our regulated professionals and associations, which provide a lot of great information, that are now being cut out of the process. Is that by design through the P3 model? I think it very well may be, because what you would hear from them is that they have the ability, given the flexibility within these contracts, to deliver on time and on budget, as they have for the whole history of our province.

And the transfer of risk is always there, Speaker. We've always had provisions through Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to be able to hold back, to ensure that deficiencies are taken up and to hold companies to high standards that we regulate. There's nothing that prohibits the ministry from transferring that risk or mitigating the risk through projects, as the touted benefit is through P3s.

I point to Herb Gray Parkway, where we saw hundreds of girders replaced that were deficient. The government would say, "Well, yes, we found out that they were deficient, and the onus was on the company to replace them." Certainly they did that, but there is value in the fact that that project is now six months delayed directly as a result of that. We would also have to point to the fact that the deficiencies that were found in the girders were actually only found because we had government oversight, which is a normal practice within traditional models. So you're transferring risk, but you still have to keep an eye on these contractors. So you're doing the same thing.

It's a complex system, Speaker. I know it's difficult to explain it anecdotally, but the Auditor General does a great job, to the tune of \$8 billion that she has identified; something that I think the government still hasn't fully accepted, given the fact that they continue to drive forward on public-private partnerships.

Various associations have concerns about the apprenticeship provisions, as I referenced. The construction trades have been very concerned about the low apprenticeship completion rate, and see the act as an opportunity to develop comprehensive regulations to provide greater and more systematic use of apprentices on large infrastructure projects. I would hope they are brought into the fold to talk specifically about their role in

training and providing apprentices on construction sites. They have to, because they're the only game in town. I look forward to that. I look forward to hearing from them and seeing exactly what we can do to enhance the use—the fair use and justified use—of apprentices on these types of projects.

I think our concerns about the risk premium have been well articulated. According to a 2003 document from British Columbia, P3s reduce public sector risk by transferring to the private partner those risks that can be better managed by the private partner and reduce the potential for government cost overruns for unforeseen circumstances. However, a number that the Auditor General reports have found significant failures to transfer that risk in P3 projects, and the key question in Ontario is not whether the risk has been transferred but at what cost?

We know that we are paying a premium. It's a 30% premium. When money is cheap, the province can be borrowing cheap money at this point and saving a whole a lot of money. However, they're dealing with a model that has an inflated risk matrix and one that, whether you like it or not, you're paying more for than you have to. How that's acceptable for the government is beyond me. How it's acceptable for proponents of P3s, members of the government who are proponents of P3s, is beyond me as well.

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As I said, I think there is a role for that model, not the one that we currently use, but a role for the private sector in some circumstances to put together a package. But it has to be so tight and examined and based on fact and data, and really empirical data that we don't find—we can't find and the Auditor General couldn't find—is being used in our current plan.

Speaker, we only have to point at other areas where the government has embarked on partnerships with the private sector to deliver really important services to the people of the province, whether it be gas plants, whether it be electronic health records, whether it be Ornge air ambulance, whether it be the SAMS computer program. These are things where the government has partnered up with the private sector, I guess, in order to mitigate the risk. The thought is that the private sector does it better and has less problems. Well, we see that that certainly isn't the case in at least these five instances. We are concerned that the more the government focuses on the use of P3s, the more we will go down that road.

Why is it so important that we look at the value of P3s? It's important because it was made clear by the Conference Board that "Most of the efficiency gains in a P3 procurement rest on a successful and cost-effective allocation of risks between public and private partners." In other words, without the transfer of the risk costs at a reasonable price, most P3 alternatives have a higher price tag than the conventional public model. That was data from the Conference Board of Canada.

Again, it's right here for us all to explore, to understand and to investigate. It's the Auditor General's annual report. I wish I could reference exactly that page, but I'm

sure if you gave our Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, a call, she would be happy to point you to her data and very clearly, without bias, show you why P3s in the province of Ontario at this very moment aren't providing the value for dollar that the government is touting them to have.

Specifically around the bill, there are some supportable provisions that are built into it. The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets, criteria on whether the project fits with municipal plans, as I referenced. They are subject to specifics in regulations that are yet to be developed.

The government must require that the architects and other design professionals relating to infrastructure be involved in the design of infrastructure assets. That seems quite reasonable. I think that's a big win for our architects in the province of Ontario, to be a component or to be a voice at the table when it comes to the design aspects of it. We have an incredible history of architectural design in school and professionals that have a lot to offer, and it's nice to see that their voices will be heard and their resources will be used.

There's the apprentices provision.

Speaker, we hear the government talk a lot about infrastructure these days. As I said earlier, it doesn't seem that they have a plan. They know they need to build infrastructure. They know that communities are asking for infrastructure. My colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills was able to list off about 10 different projects in the last five minutes of his discussion that are priorities for his region.

I know that Highway 3 in Essex, which links Leamington to the new border crossing, is a priority, something that is vital to our greenhouse industry, something that was started by my predecessor, the late Bruce Crozier. It's actually called Bruce Crozier Way, and it is built into the Southern Highways Program. However, it stands half completed at this moment.

We wonder what the government's intention is to actually fulfill not only their obligation and their promise to our community but to fulfill what actually Bruce Crozier started, which was the completion and the widening of Highway 3. It's something that I'm going to be taking up, along with members of my community, to champion: to call on the government to live up to their promise to deliver that new link for us. It's something that would position us well in the future and be an artery for the new Herb Gray Parkway for the rural areas of Essex county.

We would like to see that. However, without a plan, we don't know what the government's intentions are. The 10-year plan here, I think, is a novel and an admirable step. However, we would have liked to have seen that 10-year plan 10 years ago.

Hon. David Zimmer: What?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You could have done it 10 years ago. You could have it done 20 years ago. There was nothing stopping the government from developing a 10-year or 20-year plan 20 years ago.

Hon. David Zimmer: You have to be in government.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, you've been the government for 15 years, or whatever.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Twelve.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: However long it has been, you would have thought that maybe it would have been a priority for the government to start to actually plan, be prudent, and to give communities a clear sense of direction when it comes to infrastructure spending and prioritizing.

We'll see what happens. We have a deficit in rural Ontario when it comes to basic needs: roads, sewers, bridges, overpasses. Of course, rural schools and rural hospitals as well need to be supported and enhanced. When we hear the government tout "consolidation of schools" and "modernization of hospitals," those are keywords. We know that those are going to be cut and slashed and eliminated out of communities, which doesn't breed confidence into rural Ontario. It doesn't help sustain viable communities.

When you eliminate a birthing centre from a regional hospital or a local hospital it doesn't infuse confidence into young parents to move there. In turn, it doesn't give confidence to businesses to plant their roots there. There is a connectivity here. Also, when you start to have less babies in a certain area, you start to need less school space, so it makes your schools less viable.

I hope that those considerations are going to be built into the long-term aspect of the plan and the connectivity and the symbiotic relationship between our infrastructure and the people that use them and our economy. It's integrally important and we believe it can be done responsibly. We also believe that it can be financed responsibly as well.

We have measures of transparency and accountability built into our spending that provide the oversight. We give good value for dollars. You have to be truthful about it. You have to be up front. You have to tell your communities and your province that, "These things cost money, and we're going to ask for us all to pitch in to build them."

I think that our province is ready for that conversation. They're ready for some straight talk when it comes to financing the important needs of our community, not simply politicking and throwing ideas to the wind to see what sticks out there, throwing ideas across the—

Hon. David Zimmer: We don't do politics over here; we do policy.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm listening. I shouldn't be doing that. I should know better than to listen to the minister.

Hon. David Zimmer: We do policy, not politics.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They do policy, not politics. I have yet to see it, Minister, and I'm looking forward to it. Maybe this is the first step on your long road to policy rather than politics.

Speaker, I think I've beaten this one to death at this point. I talked about the risk matrix built into P3s. I've talked about the transfer of risk. As I've said, this bill—here's the title again: Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs

and Prosperity Act. How wonderful: infrastructure for jobs and prosperity. Yes, we need infrastructure, we need jobs and we all hope that we're going to be prosperous.

Hon. David Zimmer: Is your leader speaking this afternoon?

Where's their leader?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's funny. That's funny.

However, it is a shell of a bill. It is a vehicle, we hope, that allows for broad consultation a really important subject, an important topic. It's one that we hope the government takes seriously and doesn't continue to infuse politics above policy in it, because there's so much that's vague in here, and it gives them the ability, through regulation, to really do the politics as they know how in specific and strategic areas, rather than for the benefit of the province as a whole.

Speaker, with that, I'm going to leave a little bit of time on the clock. I'll cede my time, and I appreciate the attentive nature of all the members in the House, specifically the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. He's always a great listener of mine.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to talk about the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I can't think of two items, jobs and infrastructure, that rate much higher in my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East than just that. When I do tele-town halls and do the little survey of what's most important to my constituents, along with transit, of course, seniors' care, health care, jobs are right up there, particularly because the unemployment rate is very, very high in Durham, and the unemployment rate for youth in Durham is even higher than the unemployment rate for youth in the entire province. So it's a big concern of mine and of my constituents. But we do hope with good infrastructure planning that there will be more jobs in Durham region.

I also represent Scarborough East. That's a smaller part of my riding, but it's also a very important part of my riding as well.

There's lots going on in Durham in terms of infrastructure potential, with the development of the Seaton lands. Also, there is a proposal for a multi-tourism destination called Durham Live. So I think a bill like this that encourages a principled and evidence-based approach to long-term infrastructure planning and supports job creation is very, very important to the economic growth of our province and locally for all of us in our ridings. Like I said, I can't think of anything that's much more important to the community I represent and the region I live in.

I'm looking forward to the continued discussion of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I did listen very attentively to the member from Essex, partly because I was here all alone on my side of the House and I had nobody to chat with.

I just want to say that really it is about focusing on results and focusing on what makes sense. What I'm starting to realize after just over a year in this House is that this side of the House seems to really focus on science, on data, on evidence-based decisions, whereas the government side of the House seems to really focus on wishful thinking—"We'll throw something in the air, and we hope that it lands, splat, and can somehow create a job"—without showing us the evidence or the strategy to really get some support from this side of the House.

I just want to mention a couple of projects in my riding of Thornhill; one is subways. The residents of Thornhill, Unionville, Markham—even now all the way in Newmarket—have been anxiously waiting to see the Yonge subway expanded to Richmond Hill. All of a sudden it was decided that a subway, which had never been discussed, would go up to Vaughan, up Jane Street to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre that is going to be built—it's still not built—in the middle of big box stores, fields, industry; nobody really lives there. Everybody is wondering why the subway would go up there. People have remarked to me, "Is it because it's a Liberal-held riding, and we're in a Conservative-held riding?" I say, "Well, you're going to have to speak to the people in government who do the planning."

That subway is once again delayed. I would have preferred to see the Spadina line go up to York University and then make its way to the airport. It would have completely caused us to realize that we did not need to have an express Pearson train route, because we could have had a subway system, if it was managed efficiently, to get downtown quickly—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think my colleague actually did an admirable job of highlighting our concerns about the bill and addressing some of the current situations that this province faces on infrastructure.

It's really interesting; today, of course, the government came out with this plan to sell off 60% of Hydro One. For hundreds of years, governments have been able to figure out how to fund infrastructure, but now we have to sell this important asset, which is incredibly short-sighted.

What they have before them is a plan. The Auditor General accurately highlighted some inefficiencies in the way this province is procuring infrastructure. What I like about this bill, though, is it says that they want the government to apply some principles. Well, the principle that we would like to see applied to the way infrastructure is funded is actually empirical evidence. The Auditor General found, as the government made the case

around risk transfer, that no empirical evidence actually existed.

In fact, from page 197, she says: "For 74 infrastructure projects (either completed or under way) where Infrastructure Ontario concluded that private-sector project delivery under the AFP ... would be more cost-effective, we noted that the tangible costs (such as construction, financing, legal services, engineering services and project management services) were estimated to be ... \$8 billion higher than they were estimated to be if the projects were contracted out and managed by the public sector."

When Infrastructure Ontario came to the committee and the member and I had an opportunity to challenge them, they could not justify the bias, the tendency to actually always find that P3s were in favour.

Instead of selling off Hydro One, they could actually adapt the way they procure infrastructure in the province of Ontario and the savings, going forward, would be immense. There is no need whatsoever to sell Hydro One to fund infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I had the opportunity to listen to the member. I was seated behind the speaker here and I appreciate the remarks that the member from Essex had to say today.

This bill was introduced back in July of last year. It's 10 months old. The government has a plan. We've had that plan at least since the last budget before the election last year. The plan is simply to build up our infrastructure and keep not just roads but bridges, subways and whatever else in good working order. This bill forces infrastructure projects to be prioritized.

I remember my time on Scarborough city council. I chaired a works committee from 1991 to 1997—six years. What I noticed was that the province—it started with the Bob Rae government, then when the Mike Harris government came in it got even worse. The funding and the prioritizing of projects and infrastructure, at least in Scarborough and Metro Toronto, was just disheveled, totally disorganized; it was in that case. Before that, things were kind of organized properly and the province would really help municipalities a lot when it came to infrastructure and they worked together. But eventually they weaned themselves off it.

By the final year of the Bob Rae government and the first year of the Mike Harris government, the money stopped coming to the city of Scarborough. It was almost like downloading again.

This bill is trying to, again, make sure that things are prioritized and that municipalities get the proper funding for infrastructure projects, and it sets out a plan which makes a lot of sense. I'm supporting the bill, and I'm looking forward to it going to committee as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Essex. You have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. Thanks to my colleagues in the House who com-

mented on my lead: the member for Thornhill, the Minister of Community and Social Services—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Children and Youth Services, and women's issues.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—Children and Youth Services; somebody gave me some terrible information on that one, sorry—the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, my colleague who sat on the finance committee with me. We both sat there when we heard testimony from Infrastructure Ontario.

She puts it so eloquently; I'm a little bit more brash. If you want money to fund your infrastructure, stop doing what you're doing. It's pretty clear. It's \$8 billion—eight billion bucks—that the Auditor General has highlighted for you. How does that not give you great consternation that it is out of the door? It's gone, vaporized. Why is that not a problem for you? It boggles the mind. If you were to just do that, to be more prudent in your use of public-private partnerships and to understand that you're throwing money out the window, my goodness, you would not have to sell off valuable assets like Hydro One. We could maintain that as a public entity.

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I don't understand the economics around it. I see it right here. Do you not believe the Auditor General? Do you not believe the data she has put forward? It's unbiased, it's unpartisan, third party, reputable. You named her, so you must trust what she says. Eight billion dollars could be used to finance those infrastructure projects that are going to fit into this 10-year plan. Let's do that. Let's stop doing what is currently being done and do it with more of a prudent approach.

Speaker, I really appreciate the ability to speak on this. I appreciate the attentiveness of the members in the House. I wish everybody a wonderful weekend and thank you all for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to be sharing my time with the member for Beaches–East York, the member for Mississauga–Brampton South and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

I'm just going to take a few minutes because I want to talk about, really, only one part of this bill. In the last three years, I've had five different ministries that I've been responsible for, and I was the minister at the time this bill was drafted. There's something in this bill that I think is one of the most important things that we're going to pass, and it's something that was a great fight at the time to get into the bill.

There are sections in this bill that deal with design. It says that any project over \$50 million will, by default, have an architect and a design team involved in it, and that any project under \$50 million that a municipality or the minister deems as being critically important or having design significance also can have an architect in it.

With all due respect to other professions, the absence of architects in public works projects is stark in this province. We have built more formulaic, ugly cement structures—even through many of our mid-sized cities, the great bridges that used to be beautiful and dynamic are now formulaic concrete structures. In my mayor days—and I hate to go back there, but when you've been mayor of a large city, it's sort of a defining moment in your life—there were bridges, and some of them were interesting. The opposition likes to refer to the million-dollar toilet in Winnipeg, and I'd like to take a moment to say that there is no million-dollar toilet. The toilet cost about 150 bucks. It was actually a sewer line on a pedestrian bridge connecting St. Boniface and Winnipeg so people could flush their toilets on either side of the river. That's what actually cost a million dollars. So that whole thing has been funny.

But it was interesting, because that was the argument used by people who were upset that this bridge had a restaurant on it, and it has now won more international design awards than any other public works project ever built in Canada. If you go to the city of Winnipeg—it was so controversial, no one ever opened it. It never had a dedication ceremony. I think it's the only bridge built in Canadian history that never had a dedication. It's on the cover of Étienne Gaboury's work, his life's work, the architect who designed it. You cannot go to Winnipeg now and find, from the chamber of commerce, any company that doesn't use that shot of the city across that bridge.

When you look at the Ontario College of Art and Design building here—but, you know, the inspiration for this was a Toronto idea. Thomas Taylor—if you've ever read *In the Skin of the Lion*, Thomas Taylor was the architect on the Prince Edward viaduct, which we sometimes call the Bloor Street viaduct now, and Edmund Burke, not the philosopher but the architect, designed that. That building was the first project of R.C. Harris, one of Toronto's most famous commissioners of public works. I know my friend the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore is a big fan of that tradition in the city of Toronto of high-quality design. That is a spectacular piece of work and probably the last one, other than the water treatment plant that Harris built, that actually involved an architect and a designer.

What this bill will do is it will bring architecture, designers, environmental design back into it, because I would like to see Toronto and Ontario's other cities as the most beautiful.

What's really interesting is that good design doesn't cost any more or less than bad design. As a matter of fact, what has happened in the cases of some of the projects that have been done here and in other places is, you see as much as a 40% or 50% increase in the value of property. If you live in San Francisco and you have a view of the Golden Gate Bridge, that view cost you a \$100,000 premium. If you live in New York and you're looking at the Brooklyn Bridge, that property has a much higher premium than even that.

We know that what you see out the window of your office or what you see out of the window of your home is one of the biggest drivers of tax-based growth. I discovered this, Mr. Speaker, when an ugly piece of infrastructure fell down. The Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco collapsed in an earthquake. All of a sudden, my friend at the time when I was mayor of Winnipeg, Mayor Gavin Newsom, who was mayor of San Francisco—they had a city council meeting. I know some of you here are former city councillors. You can imagine this good news. The city treasurer walked into the city council meeting and said, "Guess what's happened? The tax base assessment of downtown San Francisco has jumped 300%."

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm almost finished.

If my friend the former city councillor and member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore had walked into Toronto city council one day, and Joe Pennachetti came in and said, "Guess what, Councillor Milczyn? Our tax base in downtown Etobicoke just grew 300% in three years"—because when the Embarcadero collapsed, property values went through the roof because everyone had a great view. You can imagine if we took down the Gardiner, for example, which is a similar kind of thing—at least in my part of town. I wouldn't do it in your part of town. But that is transformative.

Nobody else in Canada at the provincial level has ever done anything like this. Whoever the next Minister of Infrastructure is when this bill is passed, we are going to be able to set groundbreaking design standards and truly make our cities the Parises of North America. I hope that's not lost on people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much for this opportunity. Let me correct: Our fourth speaker today will be the member from Newmarket—Aurora. We won't have the pleasure of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for this debate today. I'm sure he'll be happy to weigh in another time.

I'm delighted to be speaking on Bill 6, the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. This is an important piece of legislation. I'm so tempted now to make my way to Winnipeg so I can enjoy a great meal on a bridge with a very functional sewer line that helps people flush their toilets. It's an important thing, and I appreciate very much that being brought to the House's attention—

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: That's for after dinner.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Maybe for after dinner.

For me, what this bill is doing is it's breaking the cycle of partisan politics. So often, ministers of government will be planning for a short-term political cycle and not putting the effort into long-term planning so that we get the infrastructure right as we move forward.

Particularly, it allows other entities, like municipalities and the federal government, to see what we think is important, what we're doing in a long-term plan, so that

we can work outside of the silos of our individual partisanship so we can plan for the long term.

We've seen this locally with our LHINs. We had a meeting recently where the LHINs, the local health integration networks, were seeing how they need to be working long-term with the municipalities on planning decisions, so as we build up large structures for people coming to live in the city, there are health services available to them, in the same way that we know there have to be educational services available, and a lot of other things that have been planned for in the long term. It's absolutely important.

Now, had previous administrations in this House taken a more long-term planning approach, we wouldn't be facing some of the deficit crises in infrastructure that we face in the country today, particularly here in the province of Ontario. The previous government spent so little money encouraging and increasing infrastructure here that we were left with serious infrastructure deficits as they tried to balance the books. They balanced them on the back of infrastructure deficits.

I think particularly of the hydro infrastructure of our province, which was in a sorry state of repair when our government came into power 11 years ago—a sorry state of repair. That's why we are investing the new money, the \$130 billion that's referenced, but we are doing it as part of a long-term strategic plan. We would not have had the collapse and the massive blackout that we had a number of years ago had we had better hydro infrastructure in place. While the hydro delivery system has been serving the province of Ontario fairly well, we're in a phase of renewal, and we've spent money. That is partly what is causing us now to have increased hydro rates: repairing the infrastructure deficit that was left to us by the party opposite.

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We see the same thing in transportation infrastructure. The previous administration built no more subways, but we're moving forward with an aggressive plan to rebuild the public transit infrastructure in the GTA. We're the ones who put the shovels in the ground and got the subway going up to York University and further. We're the government that is doing all of Eglinton. The previous administration, when they came to building infrastructure, filled in the hole that we're now excavating again on Eglinton. They filled it in because they were not prepared to spend the money on infrastructure which is so sadly needed.

I know many are concerned about selling off Ontario Hydro in order to fund this infrastructure, but let's be very, very clear: Every dollar of new funding in infrastructure is going to return 13% to 15% in GDP. It will have a three-times benefit in jobs and new economic development. We're going to take an asset, and we're going to raise capital on that asset which is going to have a return to investors of a reasonable but marginal rate, and we will get much greater infrastructure development and economic prosperity by investing in the infrastructure that is so critical to us moving forward in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important act about long-term planning, and we're moving forward with it. We hope the members of the parties will come to the table and support it as we move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga—Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 6. I feel this bill is a good example of the legacy that our government is creating for all Ontarians. It is about investment in all of our lives and for the future. As we all know, infrastructure is essential to the health, strength and sustainability of every community, in communities like my own, Mississauga—Brampton South, which has grown very quickly and has a plan to continue to grow. Rapid transit along Dixie Road, Tomken Road or Eastgate Parkway; the Hurontario LRT; or any other projects that connect to the transit system are making my community readily accessible. We are building up our economic strengths and making it a green place to live.

But even older communities in parts of Ontario that are not growing very quickly, such as rural areas or outlying cities, can find renewal through modern infrastructure. Roads, highways, bridges, transit, modern water and sewer systems all improve life in Ontario by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Transportation is one of the major sources of greenhouse gas. Transportation is an important area of focus for our government as we have already taken historic action to close Ontario's coal-fired power plants, which spewed emissions. We know we must continue to do more.

Greenhouse gases, especially as they are created by human activity, are already contributing to climate change, which is a concern of mine as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment. Climate change is leading to severe weather phenomena throughout Ontario, such as the ice storm that hit the GTHA in 2013 or last summer's torrential rains and even harmful algal blooms that can harm human lives. The phenomena also damaged old infrastructure. It simply needs to be replaced or upgraded.

In addition to making Ontario a better and more accessible place for people to live and reducing society's carbon footprint, investing in infrastructure is very important to our province's economic strength.

Bill 6, if passed, would require the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure to create a 10-year plan for infrastructure, which is undeniably needed. Our planning needs to ensure that our core public services, which are very important to our well-being, are reliable.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that so highly values investment in Ontarians. Bill 6 is important to our commitment to invest over \$130 billion in infrastructure over 10 years. This will support Ontarians in every corner of our province, from Windsor to Ottawa and from Mississauga to Attawapiskat.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, each dollar invested in public infrastructure in Ontario raises

our GDP by \$1.14 in the short term. What does this mean? It means that it would promote our economic competitiveness, job creation and training of skilled workers.

In closing, I strongly feel that this proposed legislation is sound economic policy, it's sound environmental policy and it's sound social policy. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am particularly delighted to speak to the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, known as Bill 6. Before I get too far, I just want to pull us back to a number of the key points that this bill will address.

Some quick facts, if I may: The bill builds on Building Together, which was released in 2011, the long-term plan for Ontario's infrastructure investments. It's really meant to provide clarity, sustainability and greater predictability in infrastructure policies and to keep Ontario economically competitive.

Since August 2012, the province has also been implementing the Municipal Infrastructure Strategy. A cornerstone of this strategy is asset management. It's essential for strategic, evidence-based and long-term infrastructure planning, which is what this legislation is about.

Ontario's new 10-year economic plan includes over \$130 billion in public infrastructure investments that will support over 110,000 jobs, on average, each year in construction and related industries.

Finally, if passed and proclaimed, the proposed legislation would build on this work by ensuring that current and future governments regularly prepare long-term infrastructure plans and continue to improve how the province prioritizes and addresses infrastructure needs.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of these points are very important. In a previous life, I was a town councillor in the wonderful town of Aurora, now part of my riding of Newmarket–Aurora. I know that I pushed hard for long-term strategic planning, especially in infrastructure. While our town was particularly fortunate to have done some good planning, I looked around at other communities and heard some of the pending horror stories because of the lack of planning that they had undertaken

both physically, for the replacement of their physical infrastructure, and for the funding of that infrastructure.

I was a councillor in August 2012, when the province implemented the Municipal Infrastructure Strategy. I was chair of our town's economic development committee back in June 2011, when Building Together was brought forward. I was delighted to see that the province was moving ahead with some very constructive and well-planned thinking on what we're going to do about infrastructure.

In my riding, Mr. Speaker, you can't talk about infrastructure without talking about transit. Transit, especially GO trains and GO buses, was one of the top three issues that constituents in the riding of Newmarket–Aurora talked to me about when I was knocking on their doors both as a councillor in years gone by and when I was running for MPP. Improved transit will not only improve the lives of the residents of Newmarket–Aurora who must commute to Toronto by getting them to work faster and getting them home faster so they can participate more in the life of our community, but more importantly, it's our firm belief that that infrastructure investment will ultimately lead to significant economic development in the riding of Newmarket–Aurora because it will allow businesses that are currently in very high-priced real estate in Toronto to migrate some of their secondary offices and buildings to outside of that downtown core. Communities around Toronto will benefit when they have this type of infrastructure in place.

I wanted to comment on the promotion of design excellence in public works. There's a fantastic building in Aurora called the Church Street School. It dates back to the mid-1800s.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Is that where I was?

Mr. Chris Ballard: That's where Minister MacCharles was recently. It's a beautiful building. When it was constructed in the 1800s, it was the tallest building north of this building—a fantastic design.

I see my time is up. Thank you for your patience, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
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Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

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Mileczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
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Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
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